Winter 2009

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A JOURNAL OF OPINION AND RESEARCH

Home Sweet Home School

Age-old practice has new-age appeal

MILTON GAITHER

IN THIS ISSUE:

New Union Leaders, Education Science, Turning Schools Around, Virtual Schools, Alternative Certification, Milwaukee Taxpayers and Vouchers, Competition's Impact

CONTRIBUTORS: ANDREW RUDALEVIGE, LINDA SEEBACH, EMILY HASSEL, BRYAN HASSEL, JOHN CHUBB, TERRY MOE, LARRY CUBAN, ROBERT COSTRELL, LUDGER WOESSMANN, DANIEL NADLER

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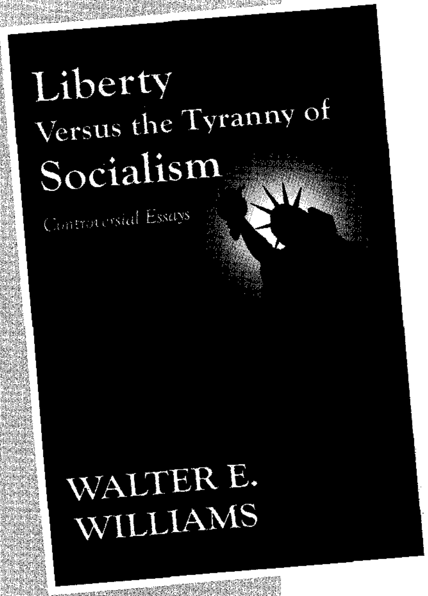

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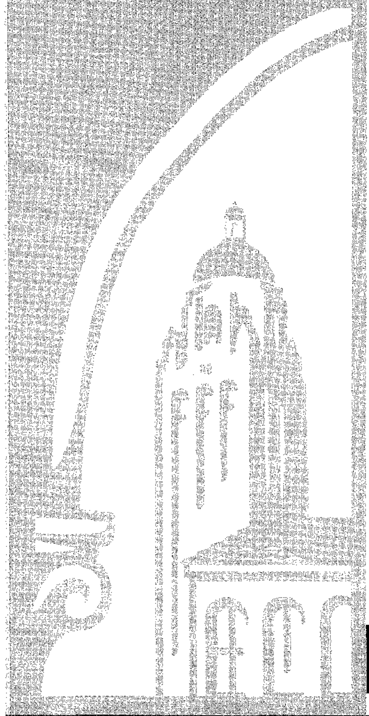

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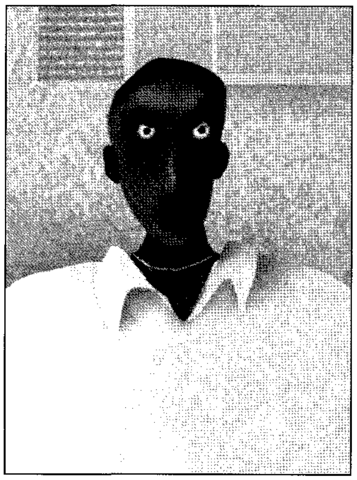

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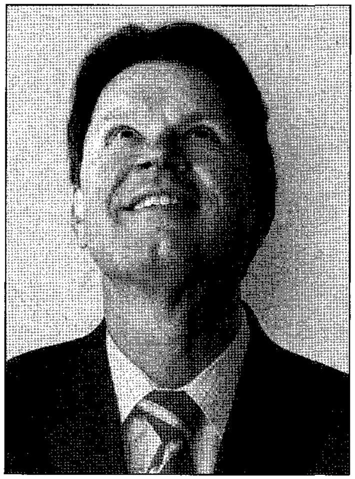

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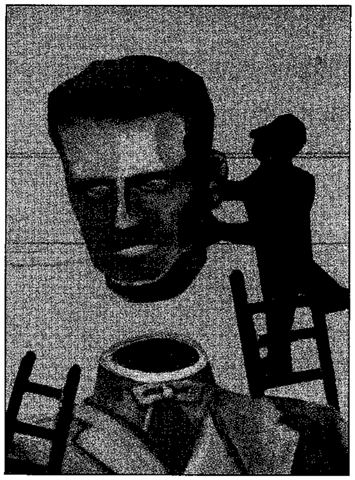

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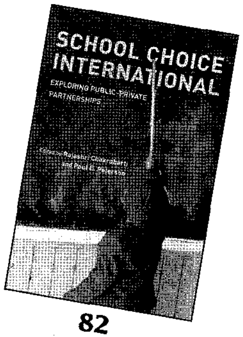
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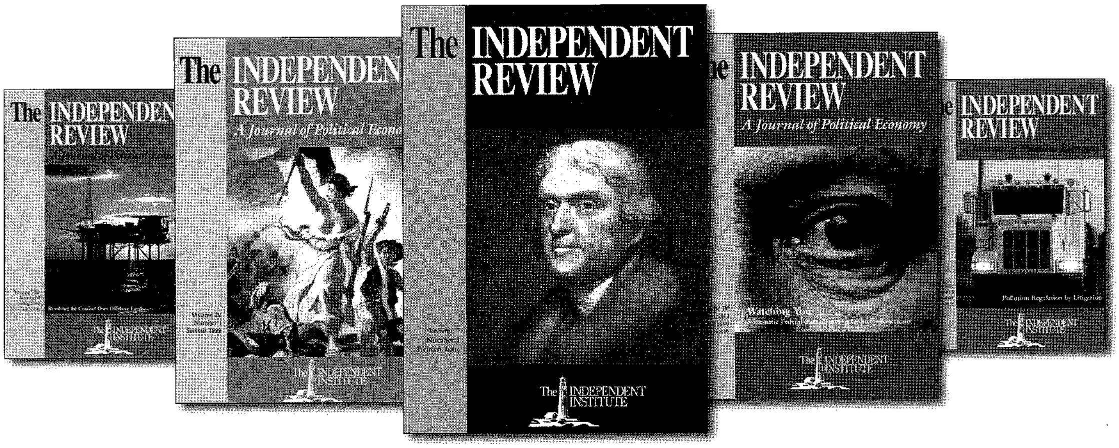

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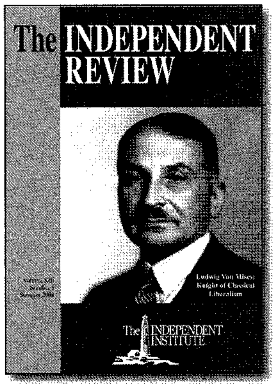

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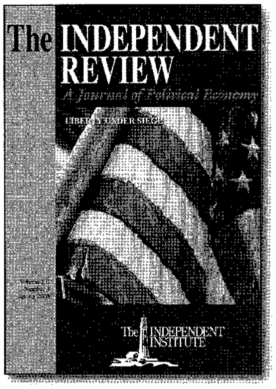

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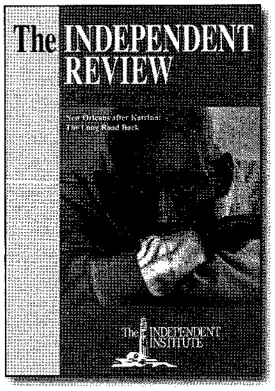

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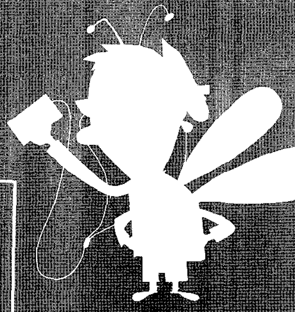

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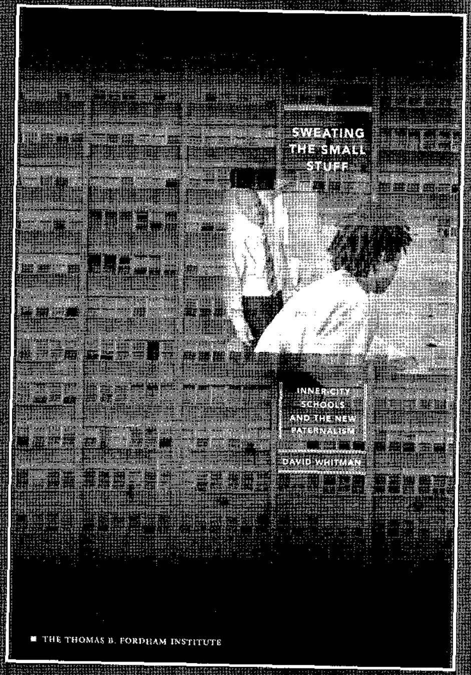
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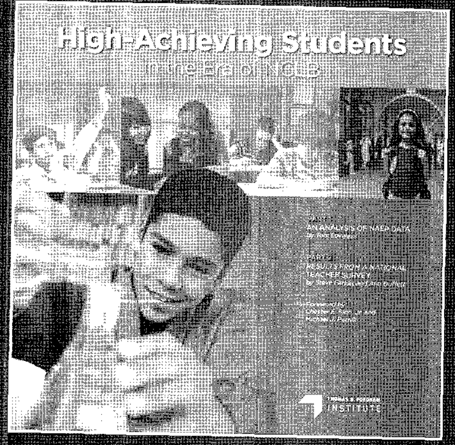
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The Home-Schooling Special

Today's choicest choice

Home schooling is hardly foreign to the American experience.

For those who think about school choice, vouchers and charter schools are canonical. But going by the numbers, home schooling is the choicest item on the choice menu. A few thousand students use vouchers, and a million or more students attend charter schools, but home-schooled students, now estimated at some 2 million, outnumber the other two groups combined.

Home schooling is hardly foreign to the American experience. John Locke's advice to parents in colonial America was to educate their children at home. He could not imagine "what qualities are ordinarily to be got from...a troop of playfellows [at school]...usually assembled together from parents of all kinds." Even if the teacher's industry and skill "be ever so great, it can[not]...be expected that he should instruct them successfully in anything but their books."

But somewhere in the middle of the 19th century, John Locke's advice was forgotten, schooling became compulsory, and home schooling had to be reinvented. The honor goes to the antibureaucratic, anticompetitive, "new Left" school of thought articulated by Ivan Illich and his articulate disciple, John Holt, who captured the imagination of the flower children of the sixties.

If the baby was born in hippieville, the toddler was soon kidnapped by Christian social conservatives. By 1990, 85 to 90 percent of all home schoolers came from the ranks of the Religious Right. Even Holt could not resist a Libertarian cry:

> Some may feel that the schools teach a dog-eat-dog competitiveness; others that they teach a mealy-mouth Socialism.... What is important is not that all readers...should agree on these questions, but that we should...work for...the right of all people to take their children out of schools.

That right is to be found in the penumbra of the Constitution that guarantees the right of privacy, home schoolers say, but getting the Supreme Court to agree has not been easy. In a famous case, the Court was persuaded, on religious grounds, to exempt Amish adolescents age 14 and older from Pennsylvania's compulsory education law. It said nothing about the right to home school younger children or the rights of those who have secular reasons for preferring education at home.

Then last July a California appeals court drew on the Amish decision to interpret an ambiguous California law as giving families the right to home school their children. Oddly enough, the same court had said—only a few months earlier—that no child could be taught at home except under the supervision of a certified teacher. The court changed its mind, however, after Governor Schwarzenegger, the state secretary of education, and leading newspapers, to say nothing of highly organized groups of home schoolers, condemned the court's action. Reversing itself, the California court concluded that ambiguities in state law should be interpreted in a way that makes them consistent with the federal Constitution. If Amish adolescents had the right to home school for religious reasons, that same right had to be given to all Californians.

The California decision is only the latest in a string of legal and political victories for home schoolers, who have parlayed Internet connections into a political potency that charter and voucher proponents have never matched.

The Internet is also feeding home schoolers an ever broader range of curricular options, so that families and students of all types—leftist, social conservative, rock star, or skateboard enthusiast—have easy access to the kind of instruction they desire. With improved educational materials readily available, home schoolers are winning spelling and geography bees, scoring off the charts on statewide tests, and gaining access to elite colleges.

As virtual schools, distance learning, sophisticated educational software, and synchronous online communication continue to spread, the movement is poised for rapid growth. Home schooling will segue into hybrid education, historian Milton Gaither says (see "Home Schooling Goes Mainstream," *features*, page 10). Some courses will be taken in school, others online. Students could attend district or charter schools during the elementary years but decide to take most high school courses online.

State legislatures are likely to become increasingly accommodating toward a movement that saves them money. The day may come when we hear the phrase, "We are all home schoolers now." John Locke would be pleased.

— Paul E. Peterson

MISSION STATEMENT In the stormy seas of school reform, this journal will steer a steady course, presenting the facts as best they can be determined, giving voice (without fear or favor) to worthy research, sound ideas, and responsible arguments. Bold change is needed in American K–12 education, but *Education Next* partakes of no program, campaign, or ideology. *It goes where the evidence points.*

Better Pay for New Teachers

Just as we in Denver successfully completed 10 months of tough negotiations with our teachers union, the issue of Education Next with Jacob Vigdor's article ("Scrap the Sacrosanct Salary Schedule," features, Fall 2008) dropped into my mailbox. After all the cross-table arguing, I found it a relief to read someone who got it. He offered the basic policy rationale for what we had spent the last 10 months working on.

Vigdor's case is as elegant as algebra: Raise entry pay. Decrease the size of salary increases teachers earn in the latter half of their careers. Change the way you manage the workforce. Start salaries high enough to attract the highest performers and reduce rewards for experience and for additional degrees and licenses, which have little demonstrable value on teacher effectiveness. How hard can it be?

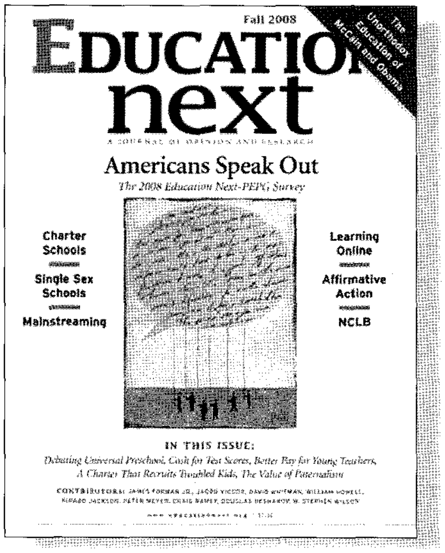
Teacher leader Greg Ahrnsbrak, who helped organize Denver Teachers for Change, made an astute observation, "As a union, we've wanted to pay more teachers more money earlier in their career for as long as I can remember. We call it schedule compression. But we haven't learned the obvious. You can't front-load and back-load at the same time."

The trade-off is easier when, as Vigdor points out, you take defined benefit pensions into account. In the last 10 years of their career, teachers earn as much per year in accrued pension benefits as they do in salary. Pension works as an extraordinary incentive to stay on during these years. Any late-career teacher has a gut sense for what each year is worth.

Vigdor may be a little too quick to press the easy button when he imagines making a rational pay system a reality. You need the revenue. Fortunately, in Denver voters have approved the money to cover the cost of ProComp. You need union leaders who acknowledge the long-term value of making a tough choice. In Denver, union members supported the trade-off that union leaders were resisting. And there are tough policy issues—teacher turnover, measurement of teacher effectiveness, varying teacher career paths, variable pay and incentives—that must be addressed in a comprehensive compensation package. Had we neglected these issues, the successful revision of ProComp would have been much harder to achieve.

Vigdor's recommendations come as a breath of fresh air, even if it is after the fact to all of us in Denver. He points to a reasonable compromise that, with will, revenue, and a sense of opportunity, can be accomplished.

BRAD JUPP
Senior Academic Policy Advisor
Denver Public Schools



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IN THIS ISSUE:

Debating Universal Preschool, Cash for Test Scores, Better Pay for Young Teachers, A Charter That Recruits Troubled Kids, The Value of Paternalism

CONTRIBUTORS: JAMES FORMAN JR., JACOB VIGDOR, DAVID WHITMAN, WILLIAM HOWELL, KIRABO JACKSON, PETER MEYER, CRAIG RAMEY, DOUGLAS BESHAROV, W. STEPHEN WILSON

California Home Schooling

We read with great interest your *legal beat* article on the California home-schooling case ("Home Schoolers Strike Back," Fall 2008). After the article was published, the California Court of Appeal for the Second Appellate District reversed its earlier ruling, which said that parents must be certified teachers before they can educate their own children at home, and recognized home schooling as a legal "species" of private school education. This is one of the most significant rulings in the history of the home-school movement. If the court had upheld its previous ruling, it would have effectively banned home schooling in California and overruled the clear intent of the California legislature.

We hope that this decision will encourage home schoolers across the country. Relatively few states have restrictive home-schooling laws, and hopefully this decision, and the attention it brought to home schooling, will prove to be a significant step toward home-schooling freedom for everyone.

JAMES R. MASON III
Senior Counsel
Home School Legal Defense Association

Student Incentives Work

I celebrate Professor Kirabo Jackson's article ("Cash for Test Scores," *research*, Fall 2008). It corroborates and extends my evaluation of the Advanced Placement Incentive Program carried out for the O'Donnell Foundation, which pioneered the program. Beginning with the 1990–91 school year, the foundation paid students $100 for each passing Advanced Placement examination score in English, calculus, statistics, computer science, biology, chemistry, and physics, plus a reimbursement for the cost of taking the exam. The program also provided a $2,500 stipend to each teacher undergoing training to teach advanced courses in these subjects. Teachers received $100 for each passing AP examination score their students earned.

In the nine participating Dallas schools, sharply increasing numbers of boys and girls of all major ethnic groups took and passed the AP exams. The number of passing students rose more than twelvefold from 41 the year before the program began to 521 when it ended in 1994–95. After termination, the program continued to have carry-over effects: in the 1996–97 school year, 442 students passed, about 11 times more than the number in the year before the program began. Interviews with students, teachers, and college admission officers revealed high regard for the program.

Using a much larger sample and sophisticated statistical methods, Professor Jackson substantially extends these findings and shows higher SAT and ACT scores and percentages of students going to college as a result of the program. He points out that at least nine western states have implemented similar incentive programs.

Incentives appear to work in schools as they do in other aspects of life. The lack of incentives in school seems an important reason students find academics so boring and sports so exciting. Though not all incentives are monetary, rational people require reasons to work hard.

Herbert J. Walberg
Distinguished Visiting Fellow
Hoover Institution
Stanford University

The Value of Discipline

I commend David Whitman for his article ("An Appeal to Authority," *features*, Fall 2008) calling attention to an intriguing, comparatively new genre of public schools that are registering impressive academic gains with inner-city, mostly minority students. The schools he writes about set high expectations, demand much of their students academically, and maintain tight order so that the atmosphere does not careen out of control. In my mind, what is truly distinctive about these schools is how deeply invested they are in fostering the social development of their students, many of whom are reared in homes and communities that are dysfunctional and unsupportive in ways that undermine the youngsters' ability to function well in school, much less in life.

For more than three decades I have been fascinated by the lessons that can be drawn from the military to strengthen the academic and, yes, social skills of youngsters who are struggling in school and in life. When I served as vice president of the Rockefeller Foundation in the late 1980s, I proposed to the head of the National Guard that the Guard establish a quasi-military youth corps for high school dropouts. The Guard enthusiastically embraced the concept and in 1992 launched what is now known as the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program. Since its inception, more than 80,000 youngsters have completed the 5 1/2-month residential phase of the program, registering average gains of 1.5 grades in reading and 2.2 grades in math.

My main quarrel with Whitman concerns nomenclature. Just as I often labor to explain that "military" means far more than discipline, so the term "paternalism" obscures the robust commitment the schools Whitman touts have to the academic and social development of their students. The ChalleNGe Program addresses the needs of the whole adolescent, as evidenced by its eight core components: leadership/followership; academic excellence (i.e., high school diplomas or GED certificates); responsible citizenship; service to the community; life coping skills; physical fitness; health and hygiene; and job skills.

I have one final quibble. Whitman focuses, for perfectly legitimate reasons, on the benefits of so-called paternalistic schools for urban, minority students. The fact that nearly half of the former high school dropouts who join ChalleNGe are white shows that a broad swath of America's teenagers would profit from a healthy dose of academic and social development.

Hugh B. Price
Visiting Professor
Woodrow Wilson School
Princeton University

Classrooms for the Future

In painting all initiatives that include mass distribution of computers in schools with the same broad brush stroke, Clayton Christensen and Michael Horn ("How Do We Transform Our Schools?" *features*, Summer 2008) risk dismissing the kind of true innovations that are occurring in Pennsylvania's classrooms.

Over the last two years, Pennsylvania's Classrooms for the Future program has put 100,000 laptops on student desks in high school English, math, science, and social studies classrooms. But Classrooms for the Future is not a technology initiative; it is a strategy to transform classroom instruction.

Professional development, not the technology itself, is the key to success for the Classrooms for the Future program. Teachers receive two days of hands-on training and then participate in a minimum of 30 hours of additional professional development on mandated content each year. Training is conducted onsite via a teacher coach, online in facilitated courses, and in regional meetings of participating districts. The role of the coach is to support teachers to effectively integrate the laptops and other equipment into their daily lessons.

Only because we have focused so heavily on improving instruction is Classrooms for the Future working. An independent evaluation of the program's first few months found that teachers spent significantly less time simply lecturing and more time working with small groups of students and interacting with individual students, and that there was significant change in the nature of assignments given to students toward "real-world, hands-on projects."

The students in America's classrooms are members of the Technology Generation, and either we will find ways to teach them on their terms, or we could lose them altogether. In Pennsylvania, we are seizing the opportunity of introducing new technology to transform classroom instruction. The two must go hand in hand if we are going to have an impact on the one thing that matters: increasing student achievement.

Gerald L. Zahorchak
Secretary of Education
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

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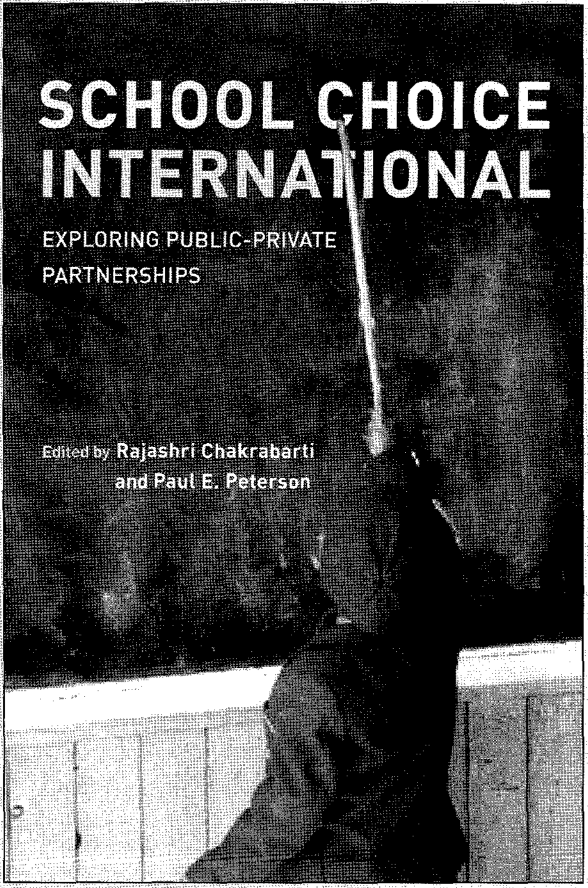
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Language Barriers

Arizonans battle federal court order to spend more

BY JOSHUA DUNN AND MARTHA DERTHICK

Once past the long, agonizing upheaval of school desegregation, the states and their education departments by and large have bent to the federal will. But what happens when they don't? What if instead they see a federal judicial order as a threat to be resisted? Legislative leaders and the twice-elected state superintendent of schools in Arizona are putting these questions to the test in a long-running lawsuit. In *Flores v. Arizona*, the central issue is how much the state must spend for English language learners (ELL) beyond a basic grant to school districts. This is a heated issue in a state on the Mexican border with a large immigrant population and a Republican party that gave the country Barry Goldwater.

> **In *Flores v. Arizona*, the central issue is how much the state must spend for English language learners (ELL) beyond a basic grant to school districts.**

Flores v. Arizona was filed in 1992, a class action brought by an advocacy law firm on behalf of parents in the town of Nogales. The suit rested on the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, which provides that no state shall fail "to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation...in its instructional programs." In 2000, a federal district judge ruled that Arizona was violating this relatively obscure law, both by not spending enough on its *Lau* programs—a reference to a Supreme Court decision of 1974 and regulations of the federal Office for Civil Rights—and by failing to provide enough teachers, aides, classrooms, materials, and tutoring. Eight years later, Arizona is spending $430 extra per ELL student per year, but has not satisfied the court. Rather, the legislature challenged the court with a law that would have put a two-year cap on extra spending for any individual ELL student and use federal funds in place of some state funds.

Arizona did not appeal the judgment and signed a consent decree that addressed matters other than spending. The spending issue festered as the politics grew more problematic. In 2000 the electorate approved a ballot initiative that abolished bilingual education and replaced it with English immersion. Janet Napolitano, a Democrat who was elected governor in 2002 and reelected in 2006, has battled with Republican state legislators over what to do.

Judge Raner Collins has twice found the state to be in civil contempt. Early in 2006, he imposed a fine of $500,000 per day, to be held in a fund dedicated to ELL instruction. A total of $21 million was collected from the state, but the Ninth Circuit appeals court ruled that Collins had exceeded his authority and canceled the fines. He has also hinted at jail sentences, which presumably would fall on the Speaker of the Arizona House and the president of the Senate, who are intervenors in the suit, and the superintendent, who is a named defendant.

Judge Collins found an ELL law enacted by the legislature in 2006 without the governor's signature to be inadequate, but the Ninth Circuit instructed him to hold an evidentiary hearing to determine whether the original court order was still valid. The intervenors argued that changes of fact (increases in general education spending) and in law (enactment of No Child Left Behind) made the original order obsolete and asked to be relieved from judgment. Collins ruled against them and was upheld in 2008 by the Ninth Circuit.

Under threat again of fines, the legislature approved an additional $40.6 million for ELL in April 2008, and again the governor let the bill become law without her signature. Districts were instructed to use model plans developed by the state department of education, which called for four hours a day of intensive English instruction. This directive caused trouble on the local front, in districts that resisted the four hours of immersion or were disappointed with the allocation formula. A Tucson-area district, Sahuarita, announced that it would defy the state law, stating that federal civil rights laws are trump.

The issue headed, once again, to Collins's court, with a renewed demand from the *Flores* plaintiffs for more money. Tom Horne, the outspoken state superintendent, protested that "we don't need an aristocracy of federal judges ruling over us." Horne and the legislative leaders have demonstrated, if nothing else, that determined opponents of the "judicial aristocracy" can buy a lot of time, and probably avoid going to jail.

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Martha Derthick is professor emerita of government at the University of Virginia.

Home Schooling Goes Mainstream

BY MILTON GAITHER

"I never really told anybody about my music at school, only my really close friends," Cheyenne Kimball told *People Magazine* in 2006. "Then [school officials] actually aired the show around the whole entire school, and that caused a lot of problems. I was a straight-A student and all of a sudden I didn't want to go to school anymore because of the things people were saying. That's why I'm homeschooled now." Cheyenne, winner of NBC's *America's Most Talented Kid* at age 12, recording artist, and star of her own MTV show, is just one of many high-profile Americans whose educational choice is home schooling. Movie stars Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith, married in 1997, home school their two children along with Will's nephew. Why? "For flexibility," Pinkett Smith told an *Essence* reporter, "so they can stay with us when we travel, and also because the school system in this country—public and private—is designed for the industrial age. We're in a technological age. We don't want our kids to memorize. We want them to learn."

While home schooling may have particular appeal to celebrities, over the last decade families of all kinds have embraced the practice for widely varying reasons: no longer is home schooling exclusive to Christian fundamentalism and the countercultural Left. Along with growing acceptance of home schooling nationally has come increasing diversification of who home schools and of what home schooling actually means.

Everybody knows somebody who is teaching a child at home

Though parents and tutors have been teaching children in the home for centuries, in the late 1960s and 1970s there emerged for the first time in the United States a political movement that adopted this practice as a radical, countercultural critique of the public education system. Conservatives who felt the public schools had sold out to secularism and progressivism joined with progressives who felt the public schools were bastions of conservative conformity to challenge the notion that all children should attend them. By the early 1990s they had won the right to home school in every state. Some home-school advocacy groups have attempted to secure a federal law or Supreme Court ruling that would establish uniform national guidelines grounded in First or Fourteenth Amendment rights, but to date such efforts have failed (to the great relief of home-school advocacy groups that oppose this strategy). Home schooling thus falls under state law, and these laws vary widely. A complex matrix of specific statutory language and judicial interpretations emerged out of the maelstrom of political activism over the issue that started in the late 1970s. In Indiana and Michigan, for example, there are virtually no restrictions on home schoolers and very little accountability to government. Homeschooling parents are not even required to register. In Pennsylvania and New York, state

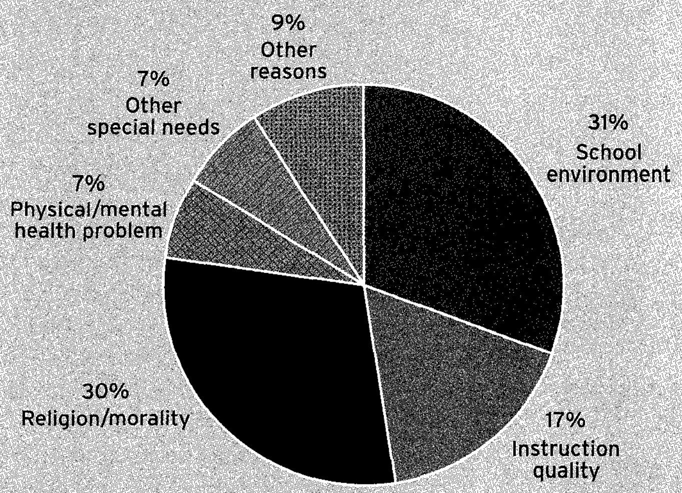
ILLUSTRATION / RAFAEL LOPEZ

agencies oversee and regulate home schooling in a number of ways, from curricular requirements to parental qualifications to mandatory home visits by certified personnel to obligatory standardized testing.

By the 21st century, state laws were well established and uncontested, though nearly every year state legislators or judges, especially in the most permissive states, seek to increase regulations on home-schooling families in the name of accountability. Such initiatives nearly always fail due to the astonishing grass-roots organization and political mobilization of home schoolers. The most recent challenge to home schooling arose when a California court cited a 1929 state law that ostensibly requires home tutors to be state-certified. After several months of protests and concomitant uncertainty for the 160,000 home-schooled children in the state, the court reversed the ruling to permit home schooling as a "species of private school education" and came surprisingly close to finding in the federal Constitution a right to home school.

Religion Keeping Only Some at Home (Figure 1)

70 percent of parents who home school their children gave nonreligious reasons for doing so. The most common reason was a concern about the local school environment.



SOURCE: National Household Education Survey Program, *Homeschooling in the United States: 2003*

Reliable nationwide numbers are difficult to obtain, but the National Center for Education Statistics estimates that from 1999 to 2003 the number of home-schooled children increased from around 850,000 to roughly 1.1 million, a 29 percent jump in four years. Movement leaders suggest even higher estimates of around 2 to 2.5 million children currently being home schooled. Some states keep their own figures. Virginia had 3,816 registered home schoolers in 1990. By 2007 the number had grown to 20,694. Maryland saw similar growth, from 2,296 in 1990 to 24,227 in 2006.

After three decades of explosive growth, the rate of increase in home schooling has begun to slow somewhat, and home-schooling rates are even declining a bit in some states. In Pennsylvania, there were 24,415 reported home schoolers in 2002, the largest figure the state had ever seen. But in 2003 the number of registered home schoolers dropped to 24,076. In 2004 it declined again to 23,287, a decrease of 3.3 percent from the previous year.

Among the possible explanations for declines in home schooling is the increased use of home-based public charter schools, often called "cybercharters" because of their extensive use of online curricula, by families that had previously been home schooling independently. Home schooling is blending with other education movements to lead the way toward a 21st-century education matrix that is far more dynamic and adaptive than the schooling patterns of the past.

The New Home Schoolers

Survey research has revealed a heterogeneous population of home schoolers and higher rates of minority home schooling than expected. Economist Guillermo Montes's analysis of data from the massive 2001 National Household Education Survey found that 70 percent of respondents cited a nonreligious reason as the top motivator in their decision to home school. Home schoolers whose motivations are primarily religious have certainly not gone away, but they are now joined by those whose reasons range from concerns about special education to bad experiences with teachers or school bullies to time-consuming outside activities to worries over peanut allergies (see Figure 1).

Increasing participation in home schooling among African Americans has drawn media attention in recent years. The U.S. Department of Education estimated that by 2003 there were 103,000 black home schoolers (see Figure 2). Nonprofits, including the Children's Scholarship Fund, founded in 1998, have provided vouchers to help low-income families afford private schools, and some are using the money to home school. Several nationwide support groups have been formed by African Americans to build momentum; the newest and largest is the National African-American Homeschoolers Alliance, cofounded in 2003 by Jennifer James. By 2006 the organization had 3,000 members. James learned of home schooling by watching the success of home schoolers at the Scripps National Spelling

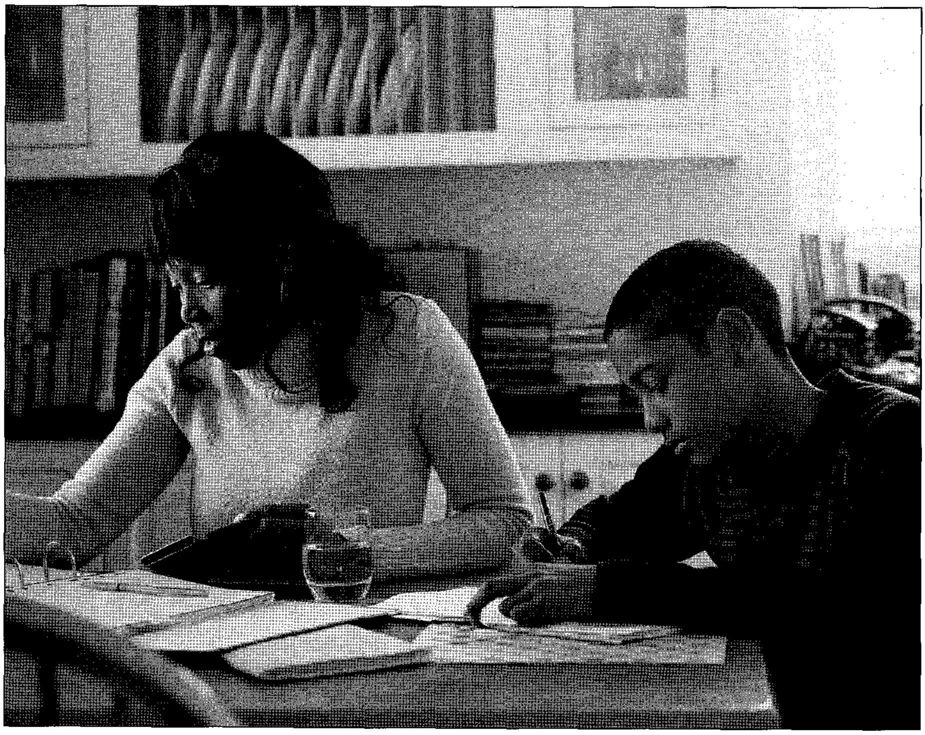


PHOTO / GETTY IMAGE

Increasing participation in home schooling among African Americans has drawn media attention in recent years.

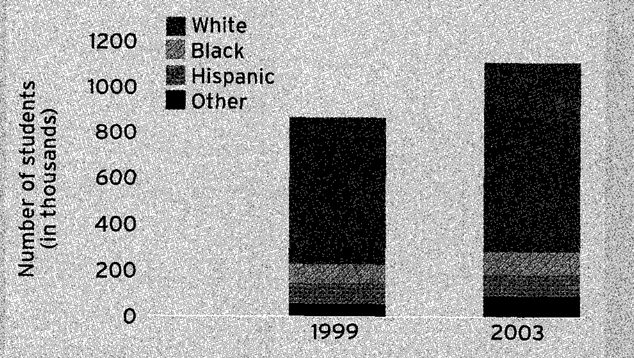
Bee and embraced it for her family. "Families are running out of options," James told the *St. Petersburg Times* in 2005. "There's this persistent achievement gap, and a lot of black children are doing so poorly in traditional schools that parents are looking for alternatives." Home schooling is becoming the method of choice for many, and as such "the Black homeschool movement is growing at a faster rate than the general homeschool population," according to J. Michael Smith, president and cofounder of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), the nation's most powerful home-school advocacy organization.

Growth in home schooling can be spotted among other ethnic and religious groups as well. Native Americans in Virginia and North Carolina have founded home-school organizations in an effort to escape assimilationist public schools and preserve their traditional values. Hawaiian natives have found home schooling to be the solution to the gulf between tribal ways and public education. Jews, especially those who follow the Orthodox tradition, have been home schooling in much greater numbers in recent years. While Roman Catholic families have long had a presence in the home-schooling world with such institutions as the Virginia-based Seton Home Study School (founded in 1980), recent years have seen an explosion in Catholic home schooling and resources. Islamic home schooling has also grown rapidly, especially since 9/11, largely because "the public school system is not accommodating to Muslims," in the words of Fatima Saleem, founder of the Palmetto Muslim Homeschool Resource Network.

Large numbers of parents whose children have diagnosed learning disabilities have pulled them from local schools, believing they can do a better job teaching them at home. Increasing numbers of wealthy Americans are hiring private tutors for their children. The U.S. Department of Education estimated that in 2003, 21 percent of home schoolers were being taught this way. *Business Week* editor Michelle Conlin explained the appeal of home education to "creative-class parents" as an outgrowth of the "spread of the post-geographic workstyle" and "flex-time economy."

Growth Spurt (Figure 2)

From 1999 to 2003, the number of home-schooled children grew by 29 percent; among minorities, home-schooled children increased by 20 percent despite a modest decrease in home schooling among Hispanics.



SOURCE: National Household Education Survey Program, *Homeschooling in the United States: 2003*

A final group of home schoolers that should be mentioned is children involved in sports requiring rigorous training, acting and modeling, demanding arts or music programs, and other time-intensive activities. In motocross, where an elite-level 13-year-old can earn over $100,000 a year, 90 percent of minors are either home schooled or dropouts. Circe Wallace, a retired snowboarder turned action-sport agent, remarked in 2006, "I've been in this business 15 years, and it's always been those with parents that understand the freedom and flexibility of home schooling that go the furthest." Orange County gymnast Katy Nogaki was 11 years old when she told a reporter, "my coaches...said if I home schooled, I could come to the gym early and I could get really far in gymnastics.... When I was in regular school, I wasn't as good, but when I was home schooled, I got state champion."

Many of the new breed of home-schooling parents, even if they do not become dues-paying members of home-schooling political organizations, still need help with pedagogical or curricular decisions, playmates for their children and companionship for themselves, and opportunities to get out of the house for a while. Home-school support groups can serve as remarkably diverse social networks. In a National Home Education Network online forum, Pam Sorooshian described her Southern California group:

> My homeschooling group includes Moslem, Jewish, Quaker, Baptist, Messianic Jews, Pagan, Baha'i, atheist, agnostic, Catholic, unity, evangelicals, other Protestant denominations, and probably more. We have African Americans, Latinos, Asians, Middle Easterners, and other minorities. We have stay-at-home dads and single mothers. We are FAR more diverse than the neighborhood school I pulled my oldest child out of 10 years ago.

In short, home education is now being done by so many different kinds of people for so many different reasons that it no longer makes much sense to speak of it as a political movement or even a set of movements. Make no mistake: the veteran political movement is still going strong, as legislatures that attempt to increase regulations quickly discover. For a growing number of Americans, however, home schooling is just one option among many to consider, for a few months or for the entirety of a child's schooling.

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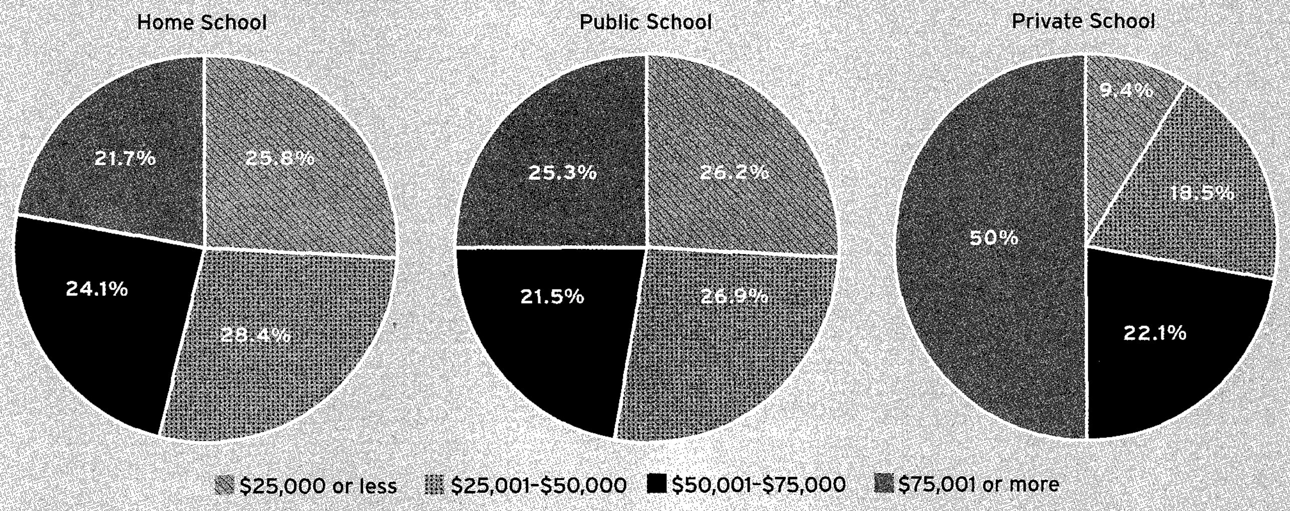
Home Economics (Figure 3a)

The most recent data show household income levels of home-schooled children mirror those of students in the public schools. Not surprisingly, fewer home-schooling families have both parents in the work force.



SOURCE: National Household Education Survey Program, *Homeschooling in the United States: 2003*

New Home Schooling in Practice

Home-schooling families of the 1980s and 1990s fell somewhere along a continuum of pedagogical practice bounded on the left with "unschooling," a word coined by educator John Holt to describe the liberation of children from adult-imposed constraints on their learning. Unschoolers had no formal curriculum, no tests, grades, schedules, or benchmarks. Instead, children were free to do as they please with the parent serving largely as a facilitator of the child's individual growth and development. On the righthand side of the continuum was the formal "school in a box" approach whereby a parent purchased a full year's worth of textbooks, worksheets, tests, and assignments and attempted to reproduce in the home the same basic pedagogical strategies practiced in most schools. Not surprisingly, progressive types leaned toward unschooling and conservative Protestants trended toward formal curricula, usually provided by fundamentalist private schools, the most popular being A Beka Book, Bob Jones Complete, and Christian Liberty Academy Satellite Schools.

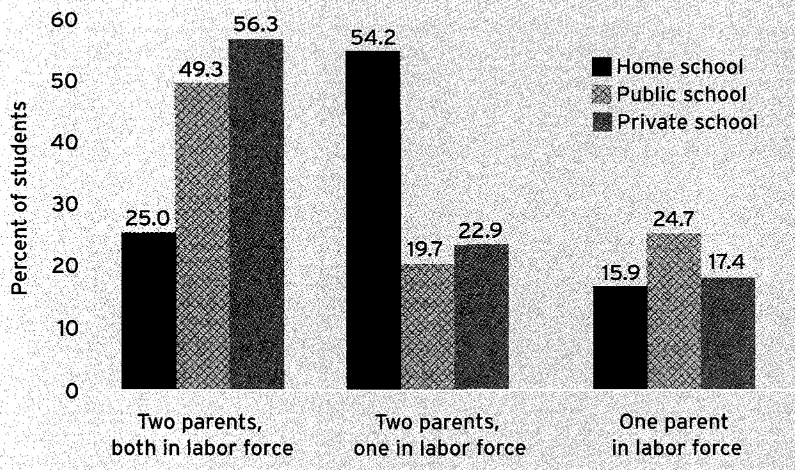
While some families began on one side of the continuum and stayed there, most gradually incorporated something from both approaches. The most typical progression according to a 1999 study by Karen Rogers Holinga was from complete dependence on a prefabricated curriculum in the first year of home schooling to a more flexible, eclectic orientation by the third. Nevertheless, since the great majority of home schoolers in the 1980s and 1990s were conservative Protestants, Christian presses did a brisk business selling textbooks and other material to them, at huge annual conventions attended by thousands, at local Christian bookstores, and, increasingly, over the Internet.

Home schoolers have for some time been creating hybrids that blend elements of formal schooling into the usual pattern of a mother teaching her own children at home (see Figure 3). One of the simplest hybrids is the "Mom School." Pioneer Utah home schooler Joyce Kinmont explains, "a Mom School happens when a mother is home schooling a child who wants to do something that can be done best in a group, so she invites other home-schooling families to join her. The mom is the teacher." Related but slightly different is the home-school cooperative, wherein a group of mothers (and sometimes fathers) pool their expertise, each teaching a subject she knows well to all the children in the group. Sometimes such co-ops are held in the homes of respective group members, but often they meet in area churches or other buildings.

The most successful and developed cooperatives begin to look quite a bit like schools, with an adult teacher in the front lecturing to rows of students sitting quietly at desks, sometimes hiring experts to teach advanced subjects like calculus, foreign languages, or physics. Others carry a more free-flowing pedagogy into the new setting. North Star, a Massachusetts cooperative billing itself as "self directed learning for teens," was formed in 1996 by two disgruntled public school teachers. At North Star, no attendance is taken, no grades or evaluations offered. Students learn about whatever they want. In 2006, students asked for and got tutoring in Greek mythology, historical interpretation, Shakespeare, prime numbers, martial arts, culture and belief, electronic music, dance, historical fiction, and much more. Most students engage in apprenticeships and internships in the local community. Though the graduates receive no transcript or degree, a 2006 *Teacher Magazine* article reported that 49 percent of alumni had been accepted to college and 49 percent had secured full- or part-time jobs.

While large numbers of home-schooled kids transition to traditional schools in their teen years, home schooling for older children is a high-growth market, and there has been an explosion in innovative programs for them. Home schoolers have challenged and are increasingly overturning laws barring them from participation in high school sports and other extracurricular activities offered by

(Figure 3b)



SOURCE: National Household Education Survey Program, *Homeschooling in the United States: 2003*

PHOTO / GETTY IMAGE

NYC families who homeschool their children gathered at the MOMA for an afternoon art class.

public schools. Journalist Peter Beinart found that Wichita's 1,500 home-schooling families had created "three bands, a choir, a bowling group, a math club, a 4-H Club, boy- and girl-scout troops, a debate team, a yearly musical, two libraries and a cap-and-gown graduation." "Home-schooled" children were meeting in warehouses or business centers for classes "in algebra, English, science, swimming, accounting, sewing, public speaking, and Tae Kwan Do."

Many with roots in conservative Protestantism have had trouble adjusting to the more worldly culture that often accompanies cooperatives, especially ambitious endeavors like sports leagues and orchestras. Disagreements over "what kinds of uniforms are appropriate for home-school cheerleaders and whether rock music may be played at home-school events" are not uncommon, says Beinart, as lifelong home schoolers rub shoulders with families fresh from the public schools.

Blurred Boundaries

None of the small-scale culture skirmishes begin to match the controversy generated by the growing popularity of government-sponsored initiatives for home schoolers, however. Many public school districts, having lost the fight to criminalize home schooling, now openly court home schoolers. School districts around the country are experimenting with programs that allow students to home school for part of the day but take certain classes at the local public school.

School districts with high rates of home schooling have seen significant drops in funding, tied as it is to per-pupil enrollment. The Maricopa County school district in Arizona, for example, had by the year 2000 lost $34 million due to the exodus of 7,526 home schoolers. In an effort to win some of them back, the district began offering à la carte services through satellite campuses at strip malls and other locations. Home schoolers there have attended weekly enrichment classes in such subjects as sign language, art, karate, and modern dance. The district receives one-quarter of each pupil's government allocation for every student it enrolls in one of the classes. The state of Washington has been a national leader in establishing such partnerships. At the Homeschool Resource Center operated by the Seattle Public School District, home-schooled children can choose from a rotating menu of classes or just stop by to use the computer center or library.

The College Board has seen a dramatic rise in home schoolers who take Advanced Placement tests. Some 410 home-schooled students took them in 2000, while 1,282 did so in 2005. Home-schooling diploma services have multiplied across the country, as have honor societies like the Houston-based Eta Sigma Alpha. Many states have begun to extend to home schoolers the popular dual-enrollment programs (sometimes called "Running Start") that allow high-school students to enroll for free in classes at local colleges. Florida and Washington are perhaps the national leaders in establishing such programs, but other states are warming to the possibility.

Not surprisingly, all of this innovation and experimentation at the secondary level has led to a dramatic rise in applications to institutions of higher education by students without a traditional high-school background. In 1986, 90 percent of the nation's colleges and universities had no explicit home-schooling admissions policy. A 2004 study by Paul Jones and Gene Gloeckner found that by that year, over 75 percent of the institutions did, and that the majority of admissions officers surveyed had very positive feelings about home-schooled applicants. Another 2004 study by Sean Callaway of Pace University, of the home-school admissions policies of 72 colleges and universities and the performance of home-schooled students who were enrolled, found that home schoolers were generally happy with the way they were evaluated and universities were happy with the performance and graduation rates of the home schoolers they admitted.

Virtual Schools

Among the most innovative and successful of the public-private hybrids is the Florida Virtual School (FLVS), founded in 1997 and operated by the Florida Department of Education. It partners with all 67 Florida school districts to bring a complete high-school curriculum moderated by certified teachers to the homes of residents across the state, many of whom live on isolated produce farms or ranches. In the 2006–07 school year, more than 52,000 students were enrolled in FLVS. By 2006, 21 other states and several local districts had begun similar programs, both to service homebound or other special-needs students and as an effort to lure home schoolers (and the tax dollars they represent) back into the public education system.

A 2004 study of the home-school admissions policies of 72 colleges and universities found that home schoolers were generally happy with the way they were evaluated and universities were happy with the performance and graduation rates of the home schoolers they admitted.

More provocative have been online schools founded by private companies that have taken advantage of charter school laws in various states to make their services available for free to home schoolers. California was an early innovator, with virtual charter schools opening shortly after the Charter Schools Act was passed in 1992. By 2001 the state had 93 cybercharters serving more than 30,000 students, which meant that over $200 million of California's public school budget was being paid to private firms offering home-school curricula and technology. After it became clear that some of these outfits were making scandalous profits by offering minimal services, California legislators passed SB 740, which imposed strict financial guidelines on cybercharters, including a requirement that they spend at least 50 percent of public revenues on salaries and benefits to state-certified teachers. The law also set limits on pupil-teacher ratios, required more expansive record keeping, and imposed strict penalties for failing to meet these and other standards.

By 2006, 18 states had a combined total of 147 virtual charter schools educating over 65,000 students. Many cybercharters have faced growing pains similar to those seen in California. The Western Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School (WPCCS) opened its virtual doors in the fall of 2000 as Pennsylvania's second cybercharter and the first to offer its services across district lines. After nine months enrollment topped 1,100. Many school districts, frustrated that they now had to pay an outside organization to educate students in their own districts, many of whom had not even attended public schools before, simply stopped making payments, causing WPCCS to lose nearly $1 million in 2001. The Pennsylvania Department of Education responded by withholding $850,000 in state aid from 60 districts, sending the money directly to WPCCS. Lawsuits were filed by 23 districts, and in May of 2001 senior judge Warren Morgan ruled against the school districts. That did not stop complaints about WPCCS and several other cybercharters. In 2002 the state legislature passed Act 88, shifting authorization of cybercharters from local districts to the state department of education and setting more rigorous requirements and accountability measures. Despite increased scrutiny, virtual charters have continued to grow. By 2008 WPCCS, now called PA Cyber, was employing 500 people to educate 8,500 students on a $60 million budget.

For-profit cybercharters have many enemies. Many politicians and public school advocates agree with Democratic Rep. Patrick Rose of the Texas state legislature that "we ought not be in the business of supporting for-profit education. Any program that takes money out of our public schools would be against our better judgment." Profits have indeed been sweet for many cybercharters, operating as they do without extensive facilities and support staff, though advocates always stress the cost of developing curriculum, advertising, and computer networks, as well as of high turnover rates. Cybercharter advocates and entrepreneurs are not surprised at the criticism (and lawsuits, nearly all of which have been unsuccessful) they have been handed from public school districts, Democratic legislators resistant to educational choice initiatives, and teachers unions. What has taken them off-guard, however, is the vocal and bitter opposition among many leaders in the home-schooling community. Right- and left-wing home-schooling leaders have set aside longstanding grudges to unite in protest of virtual schools. In 2003, dozens of home-school leaders from a wide range of ideological positions signed a resolution condemning virtual charter schools called "We Stand for Homeschooling." The Home School Legal Defense Association did not sign the statement but has heaped condemnation on cybercharters. Elizabeth Smith, wife of HSLDA's president, in a 2007 address urged her audience of Protestant home-school leaders to pray against the "assault of the Enemy" that cybercharters represented: "if we will band together...through prayer...our groups will win."

Cybercharter backers have had difficulty understanding and responding to such criticism. Ron Packard, founder and CEO of K12, a curriculum provider whose services in 2007 reached over 25,000 students through virtual schools in 16 states and the District of Columbia, has been "shocked" by opposition coming from HSLDA. He told CNSNews.com, "It's really amazing to me that a group that has fought so hard for its right to home school would oppose someone else's parents who are fighting for their right to be doing at home a great public school education." Home-school movement leaders' reactions do make sense, however. Animus toward government was what bound leftist and conservative Christian home schoolers together in the 1970s and 1980s, and it is what has brought them back together to oppose virtual charters.

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For veteran Christian leaders especially, the cybercharter movement has cut in on their business. HSLDA senior counsel Chris Klicka explains how "even in independent-minded states like Idaho and Alaska" Christian home schoolers are enrolling in cybercharters "by the thousands. They are attending government home-school conferences (where Christ or God cannot be mentioned) and receiving the secular, government home-school newsletters. They no longer go to the Christian home-school conventions." Christian curriculum providers have lost market share as well. Christian home schoolers who would otherwise be purchasing Christian curricula as independent home schoolers now receive nonreligious, government-sanctioned curriculua for free through cybercharters. It is only natural that Christian companies would resent such a move and interpret it as a clandestine effort by the secularist state to destroy them. Despite the united front of opposition, with studies like Carol Klein's 2006 *Virtual Charter Schools and Home Schooling* finding high levels of parent satisfaction and student achievement at virtual schools, it is highly unlikely that independent home schoolers and advocates for traditional public schools will be able to stop them.

The increasing diversity of home schoolers and institutional configurations should not obscure the fact that many who home school still choose this option out of frustration with or protest against formal, institution-based schooling and seek to impart an alternative, usually conservative Christian, worldview to their children by teaching them at home. Yet it is also the case that increasing numbers who opt to home school do so as an accessory, hybrid, or temporary stopgap, or out of necessity given their circumstances. It is this newer group of home schoolers who are challenging the historical dichotomies between public and private, school and home, formal and informal that have played such an important role in the movement's self-definition and in American education policy. Trends toward accommodation, adaptation, and hybridization will likely increase as U.S. education policy seeks to catch up to the sweeping demographic, technological, and economic changes taking place. A movement born in opposition to public schools ironically might offer public education its most promising reform paradigm for the 21st century.

Milton Gaither is associate professor of education at Messiah College and author of Homeschool: An American History, *from which this article was adapted. His blog reviewing recent research on home schooling can be found at gaither.wordpress.com.*

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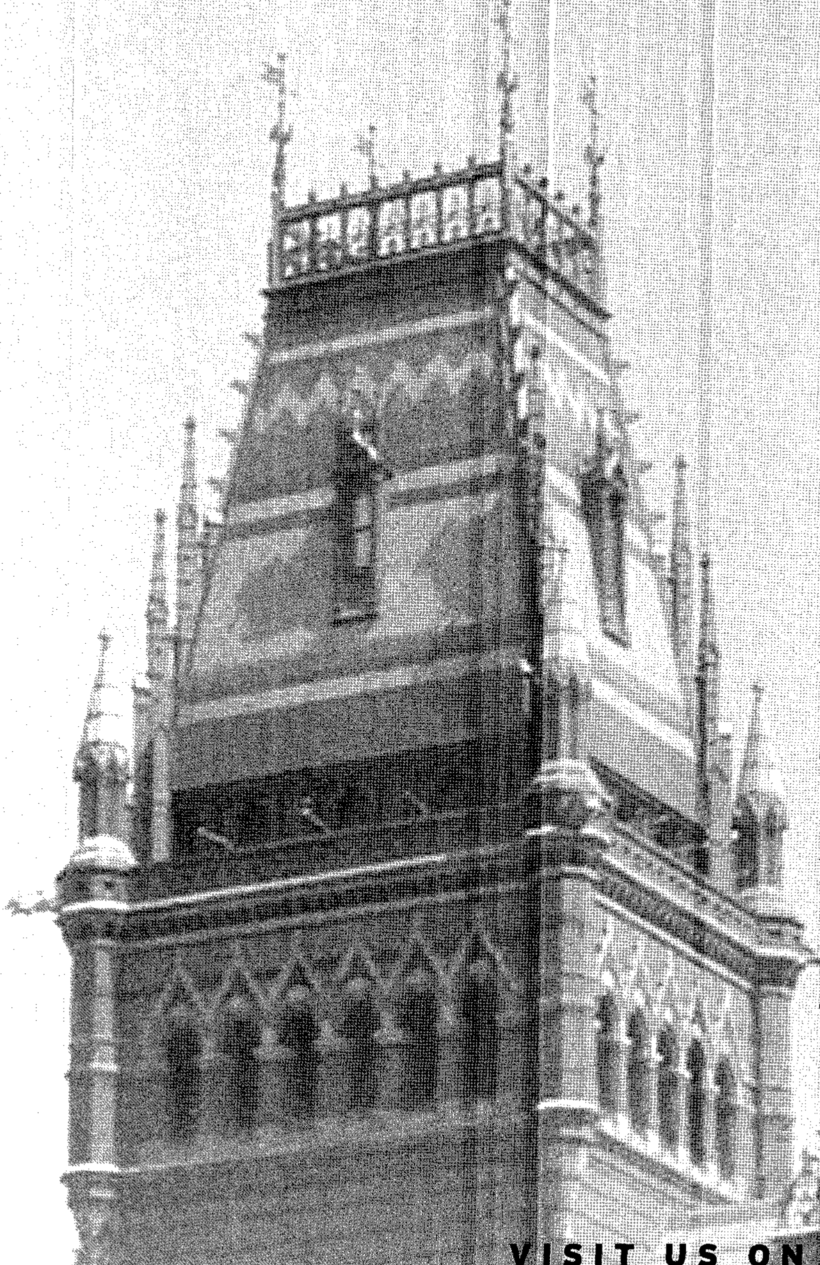

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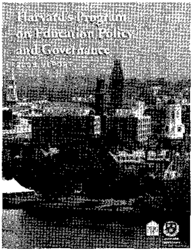
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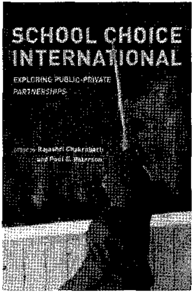
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EXPLORING PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS
Rajashri Chakrabarti and Paul E. Peterson

School Choice International

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MIT Press, 2008

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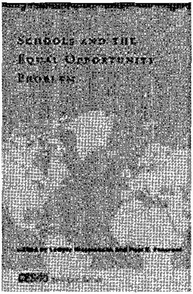
Schools and the Equal Opportunity Problem

Schools and the Equal Opportunity Problem

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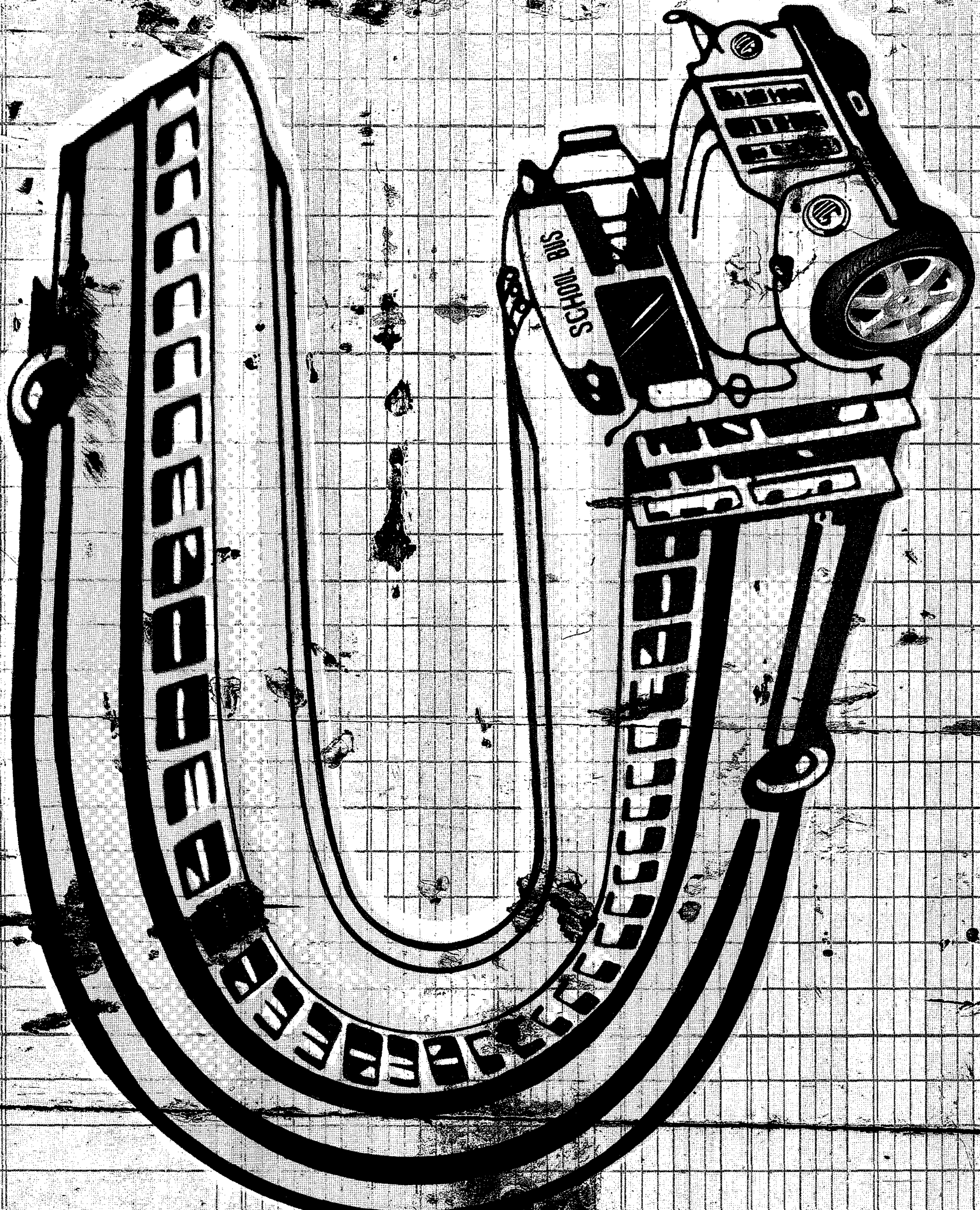
SCHOOL BUS

The Big U-Turn

How to bring schools from the brink of doom to stellar success

BY EMILY AYSCUE HASSEL AND BRYAN C. HASSEL

In the 1990s Continental Airlines was struggling, even more than its troubled U.S. airline peers. As the company's then-president Greg Brenneman explained in a 1998 article in the *Harvard Business Review (HBR)*, "Continental ranked tenth out of the ten largest U.S. airlines in all key customer service areas as measured by the Department of Transportation: on-time arrivals, baggage handling, customer complaints, and involuntary denied boardings." The airline had already been in bankruptcy twice, and was headed for a third round as its cash dried up. In 1994, Gordon Bethune took the helm, with Brenneman becoming president and chief operating officer. They staved off bankruptcy by renegotiating with their creditors. And they launched an organizational turnaround that proved remarkably successful, catapulting Continental from worst to best among big U.S. carriers.

By 1995, Continental was moving up on the Department of Transportation's (DOT's) performance measures (see Figure 1). Its stock price was soaring. And the turnaround stuck. The latest rankings by *Consumer Reports* place Continental first among the seven big U.S. airlines. Zagat's 2007 survey of frequent flyers found overall ratings for the big airlines were low and declining, with the "notable exception" of Continental. Continental was the only big airline, and one of only five overall, to be a Zagat Top Spot.

The mid-'90s were also a time for change in New York's police department (NYPD). As W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne describe in their 2003 HBR case study, "Turf wars over jurisdiction and funding were rife. Officers were underpaid relative to their counterparts in neighboring communities.... Crime had gotten so far out of hand that the press referred to the Big Apple as the Rotten Apple." In response, then-mayor Rudolph Giuliani hired William Bratton to lead the NYPD, fresh from a

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string of successful turnarounds of other agencies, including NYC's transit police.

Though crime rates in NYC had started to decline in the late 1980s, Bratton's arrival accelerated the trend (see Figure 2). *Time* wrote in a 1996 cover story, "The drop became a giddy double-digit affair, plunging farther and faster than it has done anywhere else in the country, faster than any cultural or demographic trend could explain. For two years, crime has declined in all 76 precincts." As Kim and Mauborgne note, the change wasn't just a flash in the pan or a nationwide trend: "Statistics released in December 2002 revealed that New York's overall crime rate [was] the lowest among the 25 largest cities in the United States."

Finding the Keys

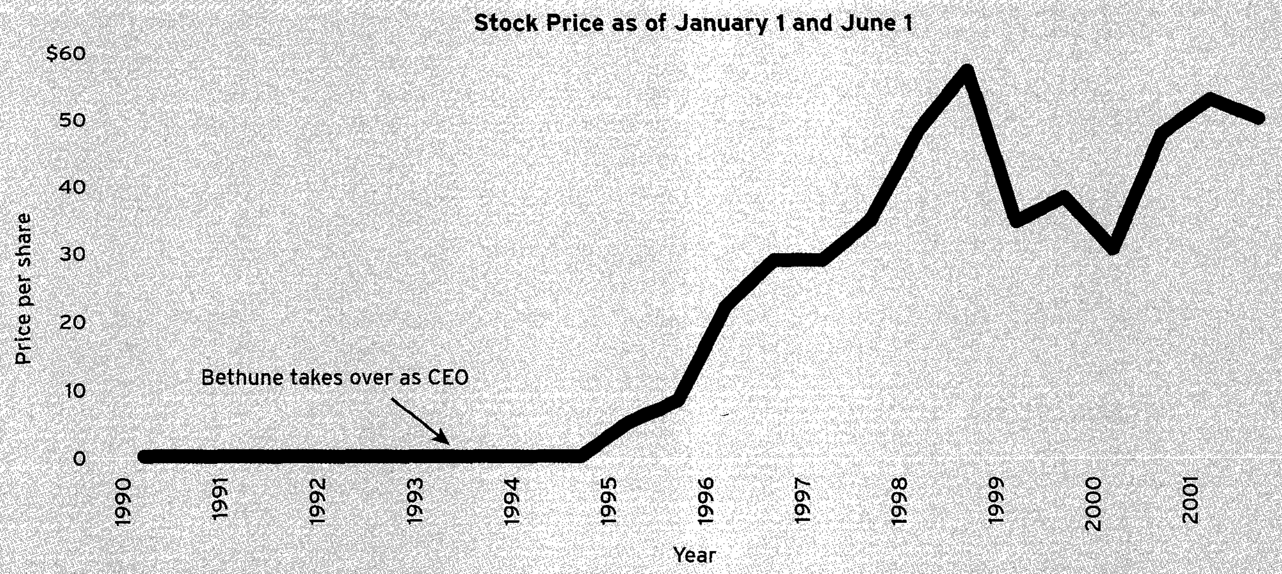
These turnarounds are classic: rapid U-turns from the brink of doom to stellar success. They may not last forever. But if a failing school could achieve similar results for several years, thousands of students would benefit permanently. How did they happen? This article explains what we know, from plentiful cross-sector research, about how to engineer turnarounds within existing organizations. It then identifies two critical policy issues that states and districts must address to accelerate the prevalence of real, successful turnarounds in education.

Education reformers faced with failing schools and districts tend toward one of two camps: The Incrementalists hold that meaningful improvement can only happen slowly, with soul-wrenching culture change leading to instructional change and eventual student success. The Clean Slate Club believes the only way to fix failing schools is to shut them down and start fresh, with entirely new rules, staff, and leadership.

Both camps have it wrong, but for different reasons. The slow and steady approach won't work for chronically failing organizations. The fresh-start method is much more promising, based on the dramatic success of some newly formed schools serving tough populations. But most start-ups fail or bump along in the purgatory of mediocrity, even in sectors that, unlike education, enjoy abundant venture capital and a ready stable of capable entrepreneurs. Moreover, troubled organizations across sectors regularly transform themselves from bad to great without a clean slate. The consequence of education's failure to recognize turnarounds as a means of school improvement is twofold: in education, turnarounds have been tried rarely and studied even less. While education researchers catch up, practitioners can use the turnaround lessons of other sectors.

Continental Shift (Figure 1)

Continental's stock price rose to an all-time high under Bethune and Brenneman's leadership. Like all airlines, its stock has subsequently taken hits from the 9/11 attacks and high energy costs.



SOURCE: New York Stock Exchange

Essential Actions

To identify what makes turnarounds successful, we reviewed dozens of studies across a wide range of organizations: nonprofits of differing sizes, some in highly regulated industries such as health care; government agencies with varying missions; and for-profits in numerous industries. Case studies of single turnarounds comprise most of this research, including studies of both large, stand-alone entities and small units within larger organizations, closer in size to schools. The turnaround precursors, patterns of action, and chronically challenging environments we found were surprisingly consistent across these varied venues, bolstering their potential relevance to both districts and schools. Turnarounds were attempted when organizations were failing by many measures, not just financial metrics.

While this article uses the well-documented Continental Airlines and NYPD cases as illustrations, what happened in these two organizations is similar to what we saw across the research. We coded the cases from this broad research to reveal two overall success factors.

First, turnaround leaders work in an *environment* that gives them what we call "the big yes." Second, bad-to-great transformations require a point-guard leader who both drives key changes and deftly influences stakeholders to support and engage in dramatic transformation. To be sure, staff help effect a turnaround, but the leader is the unapologetic driver of change in successful turnarounds. Effective turnaround leaders follow a formula of common actions that spur dramatic improvement. The actions interact to move the organization rapidly toward impressive, mission-determined results that influence stakeholders to support additional change. Below, we explain the six most consistent *actions* in the bad-to-great formula and provide an example of what each action might entail in school and district turnarounds.

Bad-to-great transformations require a point-guard leader who both drives key changes and deftly influences stakeholders to support and engage in dramatic transformation.

Focus on a Few Early Wins

Successful turnaround leaders choose a few high-priority goals with visible payoffs and use early success to gain momentum. While these "wins" are limited in scope, they are high-priority, not peripheral, elements of organization performance. Early wins are critical for motivating staff and disempowering naysayers.

At Continental, Bethune and Brenneman initially focused on what Brenneman calls "the customers in seat 9C, the business travelers who book the aisle seats in the front of the plane. They pay full fare, and they travel a lot." To win these customers back, Continental launched a massive effort to refurbish airplanes inside and out, recarpet their terminals, and upgrade food service, all in six months rather than the four years originally estimated.

These changes might seem merely cosmetic. But in fact they addressed a major concern of the customers most important to the airline's success. And the upgrades built positive momentum for further change. As Brenneman recalls, employees "could see senior management finally taking the actions they knew had been needed for years." For a demoralized organization, this kind of mission-focused early win is vital to convincing the team that it can in fact be successful.

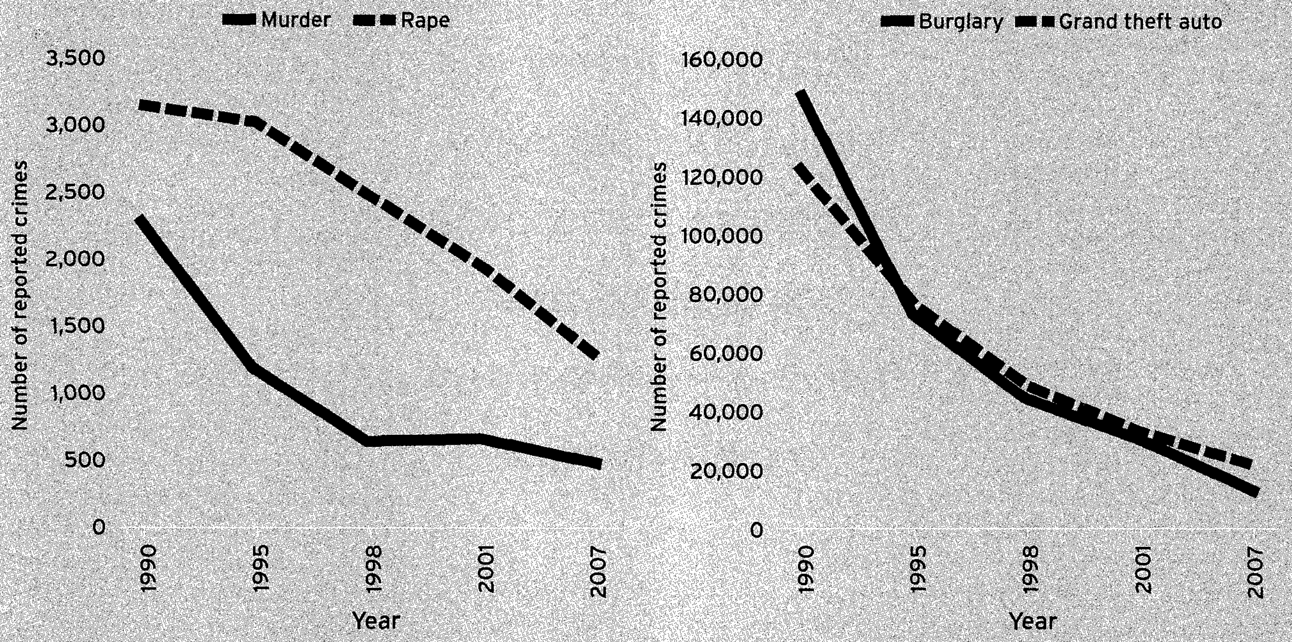
At NYPD, Bratton initially launched an effort to crack down on minor offenders. While their offenses weren't the city's biggest crime issues, the effort helped convince skeptical citizens and officers that the police could make a difference.

In schools, early wins must tackle similarly visible goals essential to the learning mission. An elementary school might aim to raise reading scores to within one grade level of year-end goals for 90 percent of 5th graders by the first semester's end. This is challenging in schools where many children are multiple grade levels behind. But it is achievable, as many cases of high-poverty start-up schools have demonstrated, and a necessary step toward achieving grade-level pass rates at year's end. All other changes can support this goal. Imagine the impact when teachers realize that the school need never again graduate a class of non-readers.

A district also must focus early wins on student learning to fit the turnaround formula, perhaps by adopting similar goals for one subset of struggling children or a few low-performing schools. To achieve the goals, the district must then tackle barriers blocking success for those students or schools. For example, a district might arrange to provide targeted schools with materials online to work around book shortages or improve dramatically their access to interim assessment data. Such online materials, assessment data, and other changes in district management systems are not themselves "early wins." They must be used as tools to achieve

The Clean Streets of New York (Figure 2)

Murders and rapes decreased by one-quarter and one-third, respectively, in New York City from 1990 to 2007; nonviolent crime, including burglary and auto theft, also decreased sharply, an indication that policing became more effective.



SOURCE: Federal Bureau of Investigation

rapid academic results and convince stakeholders that additional focused change will produce more success.

Break Organization Norms

In a failing organization, existing practices contribute to failure. Successful turnaround leaders break rules and norms. Deviating to achieve early wins shows that new action gets new results.

In response to Continental's financial struggles, an entrenched norm of cost cutting pervaded the organization. As Brenneman explains, the company's "myopic focus" on costs had led to perverse tactics: skimping on cabin air conditioning and flying more slowly to cut fuel use; removing high-revenue first-class seats to squeeze in more passengers; and eliminating corporate discounts even for the airline's top customers. Brenneman calls the result a "doom loop. By focusing only on costs, the airline had created a product no one wanted to buy." Declining revenues sparked more ill-advised cost cutting, such as morale-sapping wage reductions.

When Bethune and Brenneman took over, they pursued strategies that actually *increased* costs, like the plane and terminal upgrades. The airline started paying employees more, based on performance. For every month the airline finished in the DOT's top five for on-time arrivals, each employee received $65. The on-time bonuses cost the company $3 million per month, but improving the on-time record boosted overall financials by an estimated $8 to $9 million per month.

Like many large organizations, Continental had accumulated hundreds of regulations. The result was a nine-inch-thick tome known as the "Thou Shalt Not" book. A central part of leadership's plan was to free employees to do what was needed to solve problems and meet customers' needs. To make the point, the executives took a copy of the book into the parking lot, soaked it with gasoline, and torched it in front of a crowd of employees.

Bratton, too, made a practice of norm busting. At NYPD, he soon learned that only 5 percent of the budget went to narcotics forces, even though a high percentage of crimes were drug-linked. The reason? An assumption that the department's top priority was responding to 911 calls, rather than to the kind of long-term, preemptive work done by the narcotics unit. In addition, the narcotics squad worked Monday through Friday, while narcotics activities and related crime soared on weekends. One of Bratton's early actions was a major reallocation of staff and resources into narcotics, including shifting officers' time to weekends.

In an elementary school, the leader might bend time-use norms by having teachers provide rolling reading instruction as children arrive on buses in the morning. Rescheduling classroom volunteers into lunch-hour chaperoning could replace lost morning teacher-planning time. This schedule adjustment would add one to three weekly instructional hours per child in many schools.

For districts, delivering individualized reading assessment and instruction to every classroom via technology, for example, would require veering from textbook and technology budgets, as these line items are typically separate. Shifting dollars can ignite turf battles, because budgets are often equated with number of staff positions and job importance of district department leaders. The key is making the learning goal the organization's clear priority.

Successful turnaround leaders are focused, fearless data hounds. They choose their initial goals based on rigorous analysis. They report key staff results visibly and often.

Push Rapid-Fire Experimentation

Turnaround leaders press a fast cycle of trying new tactics, discarding failed tactics, and investing more in what works. They resist touting mere progress as ultimate success.

Bratton's most famous innovation was the introduction of the Compstat system, short for computer statistics, which provided everyone from precinct staff to top brass with detailed statistics and maps showing how patterns of crime and law enforcement actions played out in different places and over time. The system made possible big, department-wide strategic decisions, like the reallocation of resources to narcotics work.

Perhaps more important was the system's value for precinct commanders as a day-to-day management tool. The *Time* cover story on Bratton begins with an account of a semiweekly Compstat meeting, in which a precinct commander is grilled about a rise in robberies and his response. New problems demand new strategies, and the Compstat meetings were designed to keep that fast cycle of response-measure-adjust going.

In a school, the leader might redeploy a motivated, technology-capable staff person to provide Compstat-style reports of student-by-student, teacher-by-teacher, grade-by-grade results on mandatory quizzes. This effort would provide the fodder for making changes before semester's end. Most important, each person and team would receive timely data about the progress of students for whom each is accountable.

In a district, new interim assessment data would provide feedback about what schools, grades, and student subgroups are meeting goals. Slow progress would be a trigger for district organizers to do some problem solving.

Get the Right Staff, Right the Remainder

Successful turnaround leaders typically do not replace all or even most staff at the start, but they often replace some key leaders who help organize and drive change. For remaining staff, change is mandatory, not optional.

At Continental, cleaning house at the top of the organization was a big part of the turnaround. Of 61 officers, Bethune and Brenneman showed 50 the door. Some housecleaning took place at lower levels as well, but an organization with 40,000 employees can't possibly transform itself by swapping out all of its people.

Continental's new "people strategy" focused on making dramatic change mandatory for employees already in their positions. When the maintenance department told Brenneman that plane and terminal upgrades, his key "early win," was a four-year project, Brenneman insisted on his six-month schedule: he'd find someone else to do the work if the maintenance department wasn't up to the job. As it turns out, the department was up to the job, once it was clear that change was mandatory.

Bratton also mostly replaced leaders, not the rank and file. His "number two" was a veteran officer who knew everyone at headquarters. One of his first jobs was to help Bratton identify members of top staff likely to oppose or seek to undermine his reforms, leading to what Kim and Mauborgne call "a dramatic changing of the guard." Bratton did replace half of his precinct commanders, but not immediately. The turnover grew out of the Compstat process. As *Time* wrote in 1996 on Bratton, "Effective precinct commanders…merely get grilled to a medium rare at Compstat. Those who show up unprepared, without coherent strategies to reduce crime, are fried crisp, then stripped of their commands." Swapping out people was core to Bratton's approach, but it followed from his turnaround efforts rather than preceding them.

In a school, the total staff replacement advocated by the Clean Slate Club would not be necessary. While not every teacher would be willing and able to do what's needed, most would rise to the occasion. The rest typically reveal themselves during the "early win" phase and must then be removed.

The most important early staff decision would be the selection of an organizer to drive the action plan. The person might or might not be selected from the current staff and might be given power exceeding the person's current title and tenure. This individual would ensure, for example, that analysis of student progress and instructional problem solving happened regularly, timed with the quiz schedule.

For a district turnaround, the superintendent would need to tap a trusted leader who could cut through the usual district machinery. This leader's team would need to include additional organizers who could focus on implementation issues in targeted schools or student populations, and each of these people would need to be accountable for learning success among their assigned students. The superintendent might also replace critical department leaders from the start, making room for team members who can drive change.

Drive Decisions with Open-Air Data

Successful turnaround leaders are focused, fearless data hounds. They choose their initial goals based on rigorous analysis. They report key staff results visibly and often. *All* staff who participate in decisionmaking are required to share periodic results in open-air sessions, shifting discussions from excuse making and blaming to problem solving.

Again, Bratton's Compstat meetings are a powerful example. These regular gatherings brought together top brass with all 76 precinct commanders, the police force's key line managers. At every meeting, one commander took the hot seat, facing questions about the precinct's performance that emerged from the Compstat data. How was the precinct working to solve the problems the data revealed? Why was performance going down on some key metrics?

The result was what Kim and Mauborgne call "a culture of performance.... An incompetent commander could no longer cover up his failings by blaming...neighboring precincts, because his neighbors were in the room and could respond. By the same token, the meetings gave high achievers a chance to be recognized." Some commanders used similar tactics within their own precincts, extending the new culture.

Bethune and Brenneman, too, used data to drive change. As they were poised to assume the leadership of Continental, the twosome met over dinner for a week, poring over data and writing down "everything that was wrong with Continental." The result was a set of some 15 key metrics that the pair decided to track rigorously and publicly over time and compare with those of their competitors. Results on these metrics, good and bad, became the central focus of a massive communications campaign that leadership launched inside and outside the company.

"Using data to drive instruction" has become such a mantra in public education that it's important to pause here and explain how data strategies in successful turnarounds differ from typical K–12 data systems. The keys are using the *right data* to drive change and *requiring* all relevant staff to put their data on display in an open-air forum and then face tough questions (and helpful problem solving). The process helps people improve their practice, but it also transforms the culture.

In a school, staff capable of leading instructional change for learning results would be identified by student progress data. Those not capable of leading or accomplishing instructional change would be identified as well. The progress data would provide the school leader with a guide to the staff changes that would further improve student learning, and the achievement of early goals would help build support for such changes.

In a district, progress reports would enable the leader to evaluate the school-level leaders and district team members responsible for implementing changes by tracking the results achieved for defined groups of students within or across schools. Each of the staff leaders affected would need to be included in regularly scheduled meetings to present their own performance data for discussion.

Lead a Turnaround Campaign

Successful turnaround leaders know that change of any kind is hard and that people resist it for many reasons unrelated to success. Leaders use a consistent combination of motivating and maneuvering tactics that include communicating a positive vision of success; helping staff personally feel the problems customers feel; working through key influencers; and silencing critics with speedy success of early wins, thereby casting vocal naysayers as champions of failure.

Continental's leadership orchestrated a "forgiveness campaign" to apologize to its unhappy customers. Officers, from the CEO through the vice presidents, divided complaint letters and started placing calls. Each officer took a city served by Continental and contacted travel agents and corporate customers. Saying "sorry" was part of the script, but the other was outlining the airline's bold plan to fix problems. "We heard our share of shouting," recalls Brenneman, but he argues that the campaign helped reverse the "doom loop" by convincing many customers that change was happening. Of course, this communication onslaught only worked because leadership had results to show, flowing from its early wins.

According to Kim and Mauborgne, one of Bratton's specialties was putting managers face to face with the operational problems as a way of convincing them, in ways that no amount of memos, speeches, and PowerPoint presentations could, of the change imperative. As head of the NYC transit police, Bratton had famously battled complacency by requiring all senior managers to ride the subway to work and meetings, including at night, and did so himself.

At NYPD, Bratton hired John Miller, an investigative journalist, to lead his communications efforts, both inside and outside of the force. And he needed all the help he could get. One key "early win," processing small "quality of life" crimes, was nearly scuttled by court officials who feared these cases would clog the dockets. By allying with the mayor and running a smart media campaign, Bratton framed the issue as make or break for NYC's future, causing judicial leaders' concerns to appear selfish and petty. The strategy worked.

States (particularly governors) need to create much more political will to try turnarounds at the district level and to retry when some inevitably fail.

In both schools and districts, leaders and their teams would need to analyze the required involvement and likely reaction of all stakeholders: school and district staff, parents, students, unions, and community members. At the start, most stakeholder groups would feel that their power was being reduced as the turnaround leader focused sharply on early-win goals. Leaders would need to communicate clearly how success would affect children's later learning and work prospects. They would need to find ways for staff to empathize with children experiencing slow or no change. And they would need to identify vocal supporters and work with them to rally others to advocate for change. Most important, the leaders would need to achieve naysayer support or silence by accomplishing early student-learning gains.

The Turnaround Environment

These six key actions recur in story after story of successful turnarounds. But don't turnaround leaders also need a supportive environment? Yes and no. Some conditions prove to be not that valuable, or even detrimental. Some scholars, for example, conclude that too much money dooms turnaround efforts, by diluting leader attention rather than focusing it on early wins.

One environmental condition is critical. Turnaround leaders need a "big yes," a clear nod from the top in support of dramatic change, even if it causes discomfort and political fallout. However, there is no evidence that the larger organization needs to be highly effective or in turnaround mode to grant the "big yes" to a unit leader. Indeed, breaking the norms and rules of the status quo to achieve support-winning early victories is what successful turnaround leaders do.

While leaders at both Continental and NYPD had a "big yes" from their ultimate bosses, they were not handed a clean slate. Instead, they faced the same tough environmental conditions plaguing failing schools and districts: tight budgets, deep-seated status quo routines, and tough opposition from organized employees. They turned around their organizations nonetheless.

Enabling School and District Turnarounds

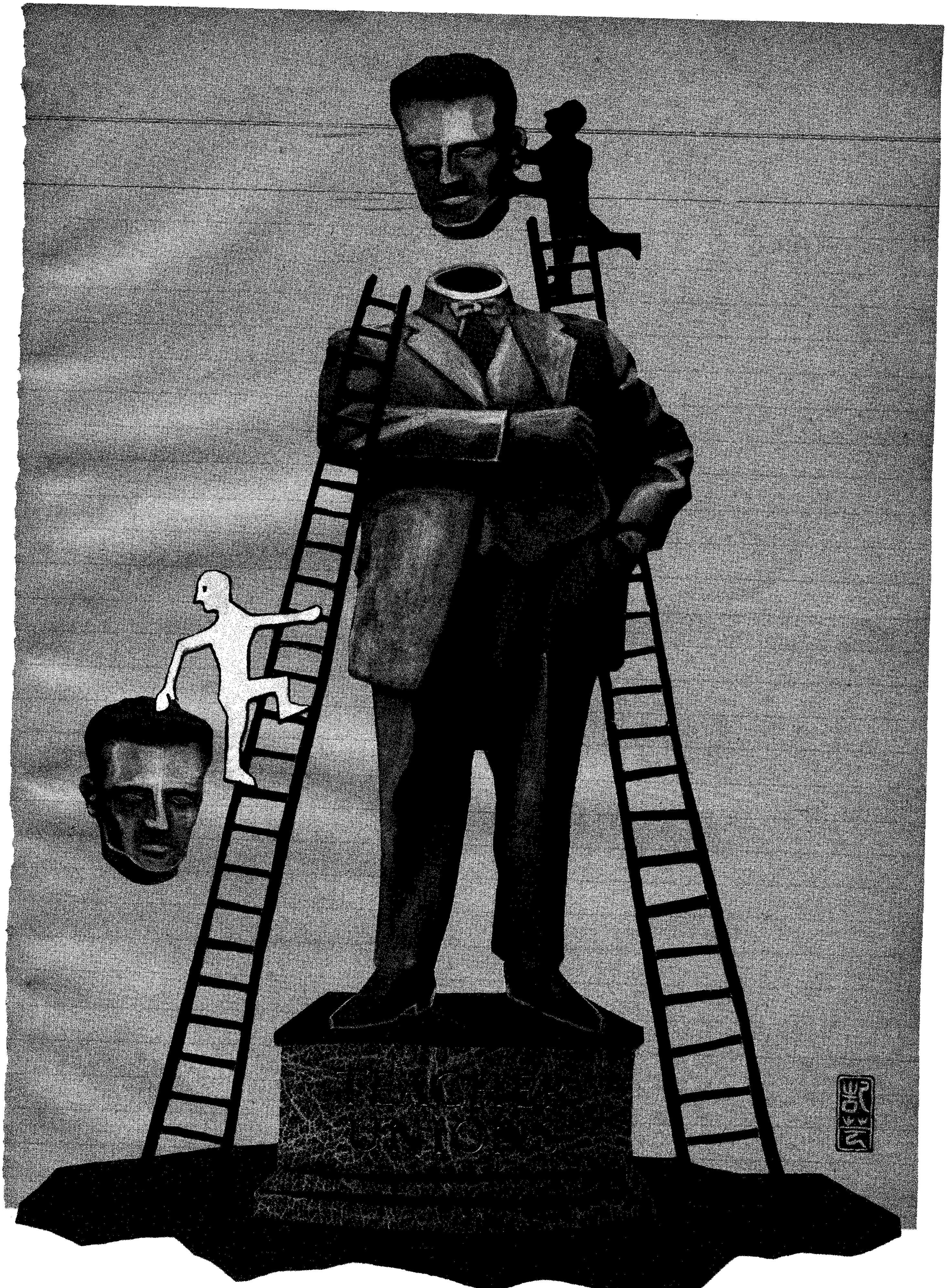
To enable more widespread, successful turnarounds in education, state and district leaders need to focus on two critical policy changes. First, states (particularly governors) need to create much more political will to try turnarounds at the district level and to retry when some inevitably fail. They can only do this by developing much more capacity, in-house or through contractors, to take charge of failing schools when districts don't act.

Second, states and districts could do much more to fuel the pipeline of K–12 turnaround leaders. One key step is to open the door to noneducation leaders with turnaround competencies, induce them to take the job, and invest to equip them with the education know-how they need to succeed.

A few states and districts, such as Chicago, the District of Columbia, and Louisiana, are attempting real turnarounds. Related efforts, such as New Leaders for New Schools and the University of Virginia's School Turnaround Specialist Program, are underway to help more turnaround leaders succeed. Mass Insight Education has launched a national campaign to encourage state leaders to play a more active role.

All of these initiatives are promising. And the good news is they don't have to start from scratch. From Continental Airlines to NYPD to countless others, turnarounds have happened with dramatic results. Turnarounds can happen in education, too.

Emily Ayscue Hassel and Bryan C. Hassel are codirectors of Public Impact, a national education policy and management firm based in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Their earlier work on this topic includes School Turnarounds: A Review of Cross-Sector Evidence on Dramatic Organizational Improvement *(Center on Innovation and Improvement, 2007), and Julie Kowal and Emily Ayscue Hassel,* Turnarounds with New Leaders and Staff *(Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005).*



SAME old SAME old

New union leadership does not change a thing

BY LINDA SEEBACH

In July, the two major teachers unions entered a rare planetary conjunction, with both the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) choosing new presidents at their national conventions barely a week apart.

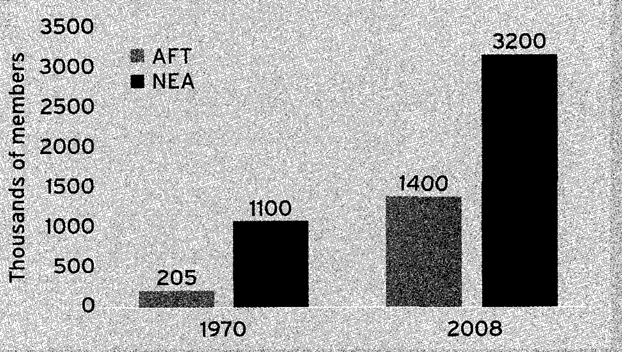
At the NEA, Dennis Van Roekel moves up to the top rung of the officers' ladder after serving two terms as vice president, succeeding Reg Weaver. Van Roekel, 61, is a former high-school math teacher who seems to revel in his anonymity. In his acceptance speech, he said a reporter had called him a "mystery man."

"I want to tell you [who I am]," he told the NEA delegates. "The mission and vision of this organization absolutely defined who I am, what I care about, and what I believe in."

Randi Weingarten, 50, who adds the national presidency of the AFT to her current responsibilities as head of the United Federation of Teachers, its New York affiliate, has had much more on-stage experience in the theatre of American politics. At the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver, she declared, "Federal education policy must be about a lot more than testing.... When those children walk through the doors of our classrooms, they bring us their dreams, their potential and their trust. And sometimes they bring empty stomachs, untreated ailments, and life experiences that can chill you to your core."

Who's Growing Faster? (Figure 1)

Five times the size of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in 1970, the National Education Association (NEA) by 2008 was a little over twice as large, adding 2.1 million new members compared with 1.2 million for the AFT.



SOURCE: American Federation of Teachers; National Education Association

Besides her work with the teachers union, Weingarten has been chair of New York City's Municipal Labor Committee, which coordinates negotiations for the city's many public-service unions. As principal negotiator for three contentious contracts in New York, she faced down two mayors, Rudy Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg—neither one a pushover—and succeeded in winning a cumulative 43 percent raise for her teachers from 2002 to 2008. She was adept at maneuvers on the tricky

ILLUSTRATION / POUL HANS LANGE

three-way territory occupied by the union, the city, and the legislature upstate in Albany, which is often unsympathetic to the state's southern metropolis.

PHOTO / AP IMAGES

"NCLB has outlived whatever usefulness it ever had. Conceived by accountants, drafted by lawyers, and distorted by ideologues, it is too badly broken to be fixed." —Randi Weingarten

Given the unions' public profiles, you might not even realize that the AFT, at 1.4 million members the second-largest AFL-CIO affiliate, is less than half the size of the NEA, which signs in with 3.2 million (see Figure 1). But Weingarten's team is quite effective at orchestrating publicity.

At the union's own convention in Chicago, the centerpiece of Weingarten's acceptance speech was the repudiation of the federal No Child Left Behind law (NCLB), once warmly welcomed by the AFT. Just before throwing it under the bus in her speech, Weingarten described it as "a bipartisan effort to close the gaps in educational achievement and complete the unfinished business of the 20th century." She proposed to replace it with a sweeping vision of schools as "community schools," providers of every service children and their families might need.

"Imagine," she said, "schools that are open all day and offer after-school and evening recreational activities and homework assistance; high schools that allow students to sign up for morning, afternoon, or evening classes; that include child care and dental, medical, and counseling clinics or other services such as English language instruction, GED programs, or legal assistance.

"Imagine a federal law that...assures that every child learns to read by being exposed to a rich curriculum.

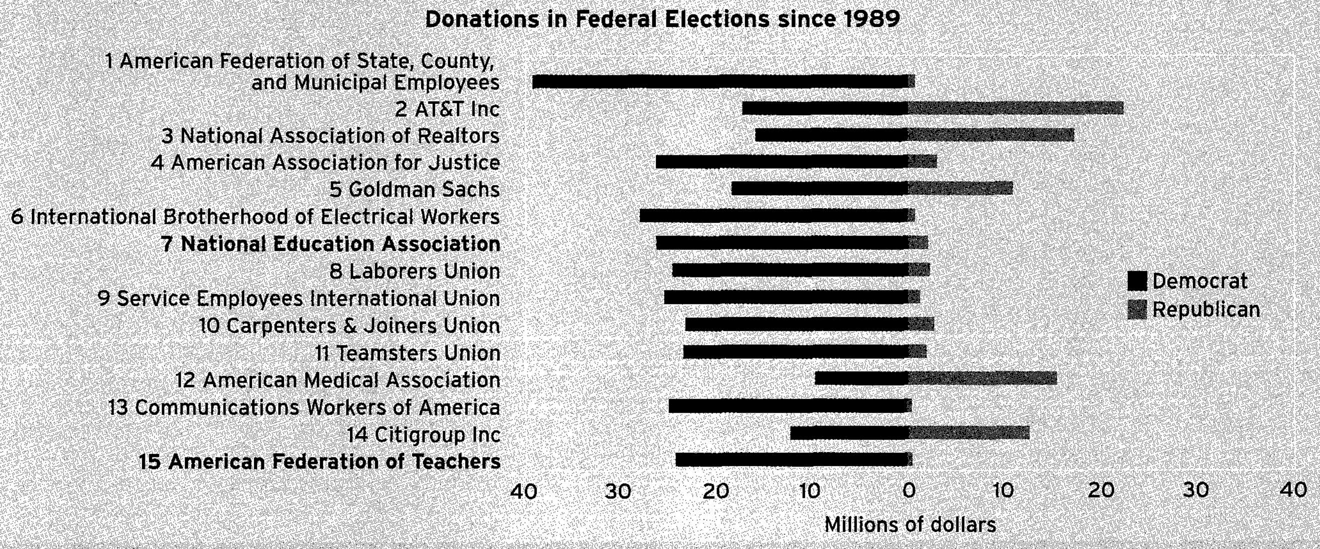
"Imagine if our schools had the educational resources we have long advocated, like quality pre-K, smaller classes, up-to-date materials and technology, and a nurturing atmosphere so no child feels anonymous."

This is "Imagine" in the key of John Lennon—aspirational, rather than practical. Even though the incoming administration may be more sympathetic, and more beholden, to the teachers unions than the Bush administration (see Figure 2), there simply isn't that kind of money floating around loose in the federal budget. Weingarten told the *Chicago Tribune* she couldn't estimate how much such a plan would cost, or how many schools might be involved. But, she said, in cities where mayors have taken over the schools, the mayors could find the money.

It's good that Weingarten is opening up the social welfare debate, says Andrew Rotherham, codirector of the think tank Education Sector. The issues are how to finance it, and how to ensure good results.

Heavy Hitters (Figure 2a)

At half the membership, the AFT spends almost as many political dollars as the NEA. Nearly all the dollars from both unions flow into Democratic coffers.



SOURCE: OpenSecrets.org

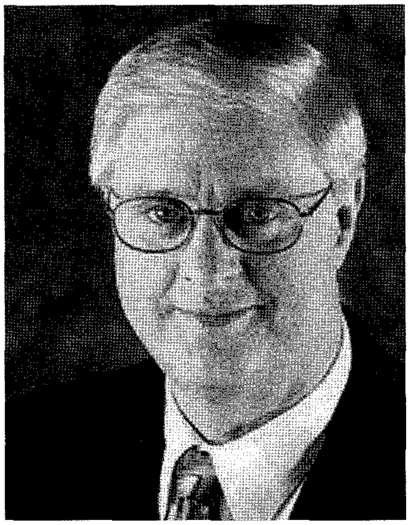


PHOTO / WWW.LEMARSSENTINEL.COM

"I am not coming in with a whole new list of things to do," Van Roekel told **Education Week** *in an interview during the NEA convention.*

Even the briefest reflection reveals this proposal doesn't seriously address those questions. Critics were quick to point out that schools already fall short of carrying out their principal responsibility, preparing young people who graduate from high school for citizenship and for higher education or productive work. Respected independent blogger Ken DeRosa wrote at D-Ed Reckoning, "This is what we're supposed to be imagining—allowing a dysfunctional monopoly to take over responsibilities outside of its core function. That makes little sense."

Selling Americans on the idea that responsibility for all the rest of the social services children need should fall on those same institutions is not realistic. Even the lesser aim of dispersing a broader variety of services to neighborhood schools that are convenient to families and often underused outside school hours—and sometimes during them, in cities where enrollments are falling faster than school boards can marshal the political capital to close almost-empty schools—is problematic. Dentistry, for instance, cannot be carried out by Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and a child with a toothache on the other. A dental office is a high-tech, capital-intensive installation. Putting one in every elementary school in a large district, where most of them would be empty a lot of the time, makes no economic or professional sense.

Other problems would emerge given any serious attempt to implement such a program, especially if it were nationwide and in response to a federal mandate (or in pursuit of federal dollars, which never seem to quite cover the new responsibilities districts take on to get them). Intense lobbying would shape the law, probably for the worse. And even if a new law were a pretty good one, as laws establishing massive new federal entitlements go, it would run up against the inconvenient truth that social-service interventions, whatever their other benefits, have limited academic payoffs.

Apart from Weingarten's unrealistic proposal, both introductory speeches amount to announcements that the new union presidents intend to do pretty much what their predecessors were doing. Both of them proclaim that without their unions there is no salvation for American education. Van Roekel told NEA delegates that as a teacher, "You soon learn that being a teacher was half the job. The other half was being part of this organization." For those who care about the students they teach, or who want to make a difference in their lives, "education and the association work are hand in hand, one and the same."

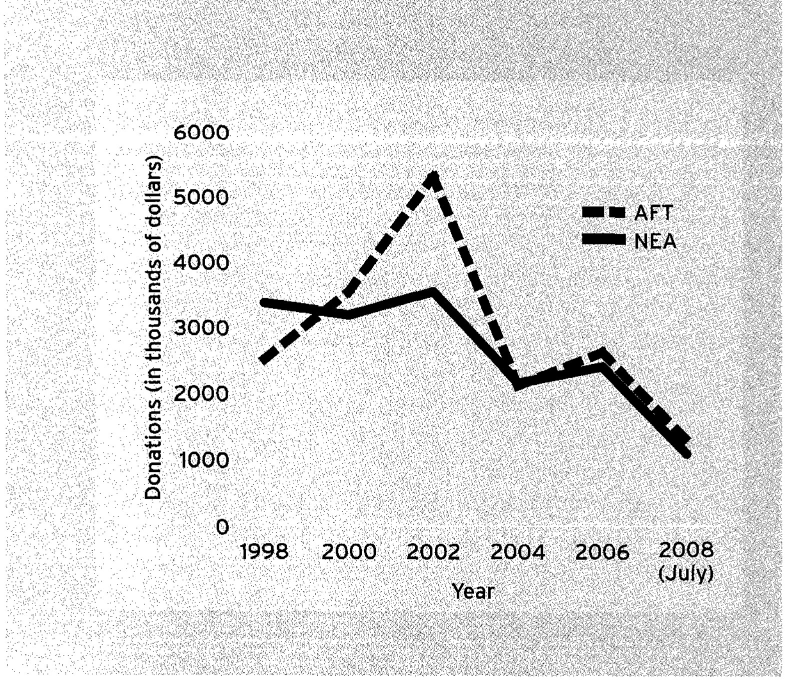
Convention speeches invite hyperbole, that's understood—but such sentiments are insulting to teachers who believe education is their whole job, not just half of it, and who are not motivated by a desire for power, as Van Roekel admits he is. "The first time I got to be grievance chair and sat across the table from the superintendent and all those people, and I thought, man, this little math teacher is really tying up a lot of salaries on the other side of the table. And they had to listen to me."

He adds, "I loved the feeling of the power of the collective voice, of the collective action.... Nothing good in this country has ever come except through collective action."

Perhaps you have to crave power to persevere to the top of the NEA's bureaucratic structure. According to the organization's web site, before being elected NEA vice president, Van Roekel spent almost 20 years as national secretary-treasurer, a member of the national executive committee, and an officer at the local and state level in Arizona.

Weingarten is no less committed to the primacy of her union, a commitment she credits to her mother, who as an AFT member and a teacher in Nyack, New York, participated in a seven-week strike even at the cost of "material sacrifice for our family."

(Figure 2b)



Weingarten claimed, "There is no independent or conclusive research that shows you can accurately measure the impact of an individual teacher on a student's academic achievement."

"The people who do the work," she said, "care more than anyone else, know more than anyone else, and can do more than anyone else about improving the public services that Americans count on."

A lawyer by training, she became legal counsel to then United Federation president Sandra Feldman in 1986, was elected assistant secretary to the local union in 1995, treasurer two years later, and president in 1998 when Feldman moved on to the national presidency.

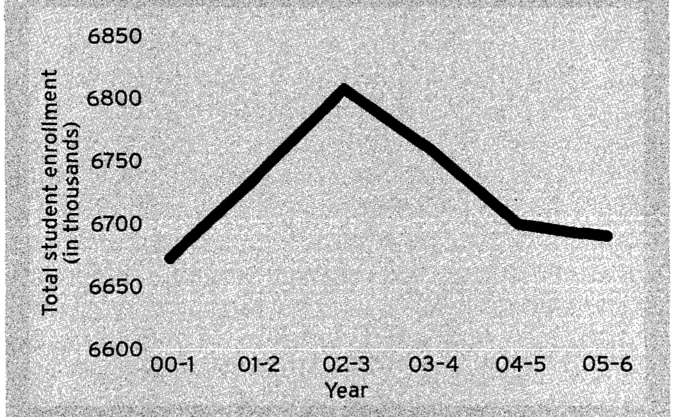
The AFT takes an expansive view of which public-service workers it can represent. Weingarten noted organizing victories for Colorado state employees (along with other unions), nurses at a medical center in New Jersey, part-time adjunct faculty at a community college, 21,000 paraprofessionals and school-related personnel in Oregon, and 28,000 home-based child-care providers in New York City—"the biggest union organizing campaign the city had seen in half a century."

In contrast, delegates at the NEA convention voted down the leadership's recommendation to allow private school employees to join the union, although they did approve membership for workers in private preschools.

AFT may have more reason than the NEA to search far afield for new categories of employees to recruit. Mike Antonucci, whose Education Intelligence Agency bird-dogs union doings, wrote in June that almost a third of the nation's largest school districts, the 82 with enrollment of 50,000 or more, had fewer students in 2006 than in 2001. AFT represented many districts with declining enrollments, including Weingarten's own local in New York, down 4.9 percent. The biggest enrollment drop was in Cleveland, which fell a remarkable 22.3 percent (see Figure 3). Antonucci said he found only one large AFT district that was growing, Broward County, Florida. On the NEA side, several districts are enjoying double-digit growth, and only three—San Diego, Milwaukee, and Columbus, Ohio—are declining.

AFT Cities Left Behind (Figure 3)

In the 45 districts with more than 50,000 students and AFT local chapters, total student enrollment peaked in 2002–03 and has been declining ever since.



SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics

Part of the enrollment decline results from students choosing charter schools, and the AFT is trying to cover the charter school bases. *The Economist* noted that the AFT has successfully organized more than 70 charter schools, in 10 states. Weingarten's New York local supports three charter schools itself, one opened just this fall.

Organizing schools one by one, though, or even a few at a time, is a tough way for a union to grow. Many charters are established by former public school teachers who left those jobs in part because they chafed under certain aspects of union contracts. And the prospects for laws compelling charter unionization, state by state, let alone federally, are not promising.

The organizations differ, but not by much, on No Child Left Behind. According to *Education Week*, the NEA released a list of its priorities for improving the law, including support for the teaching profession, sustained federal funding for mandates, and promotion of innovation and best practices. The union's newest manifesto, released just before the convention, is an anti-NCLB screed titled "Great Public Schools for Every Student by 2020: Achieving A New Balance in the Federal Role to Transform America's Public Schools." It calls for an expanded federal role in education, which somehow or other still respects the primary role of states, districts, and schools. That is, we need more money but we don't want you telling us how to spend it.

Weingarten said simply, "NCLB has outlived whatever usefulness it ever had. Conceived by accountants, drafted by lawyers, and distorted by ideologues, it is too badly broken to be fixed."

The AFT claims to be in favor of accountability, but only if accountability takes into account "the conditions that are beyond the teacher's or the school's control" and the federal government provides the necessary resources. Those were excuses for failure before No Child Left Behind, and they will be again.

Van Roekel said his union remains opposed to basing teacher pay on test scores. Once again, Weingarten demonstrates the greater political skill. On the one side, she agreed with New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg to a test plan offering monetary incentives to teachers in schools whose poorest students make significant gains in achievement (see "New York City's Education Battles," *features*, Spring 2008). But then she persuaded the New York state legislature to block Bloomberg's push to make student performance one of the criteria for awarding teacher tenure.

The mayor condemned the legislature's response: "There's a policy change to prevent school boards from judging teachers on whether or not they teach, and whether or not their kids learn," he told the *New York Daily News*. "I happen to think that is just an outrage and it's unconscionable."

Teachers should be accountable just as other employees are, Bloomberg said. "All of us are judged on whether or not we do a good job, and to not judge teachers the same ways, it's an insult to the teachers."

The *New York Times* weighed in as well: "It is an absurd ban that does a disservice to the state's millions of public school students."

Weingarten justified the change by claiming, "There is no independent or conclusive research that shows you can accurately measure the impact of an individual teacher on a student's academic achievement."

That's the kind of flat-out indefensible pronouncement that only a union official would risk making. Years of experience with value-added assessments such as the one pioneered by William Sanders in Tennessee have provided plenty of evidence that most individual teachers can be reliably compared on how effective they are at raising academic performance. But acknowledging any such obvious fact would sweep the support from under the fixed salary ladders that are the basis for teacher contracts in most districts.

So is there any prospect for reform in the near term? On the NEA side, almost certainly not.

"I am not coming in with a whole new list of things to do," Van Roekel told *Education Week* in an interview during the convention. "I don't think it's about me; it's about the organization. I am going to do all I can during my time to move the mission of this organization along."

As for the AFT, Weingarten, always the more adept, called for "a bold new vision" to strengthen neighborhood schools. But so far, she hasn't said what it might be, other than suggesting that school personnel take on the roles of social worker and distributors of medical services.

Linda Seebach retired in 2007 as an editorial writer and columnist for the Rocky Mountain News *in Denver, where she frequently wrote about education.*

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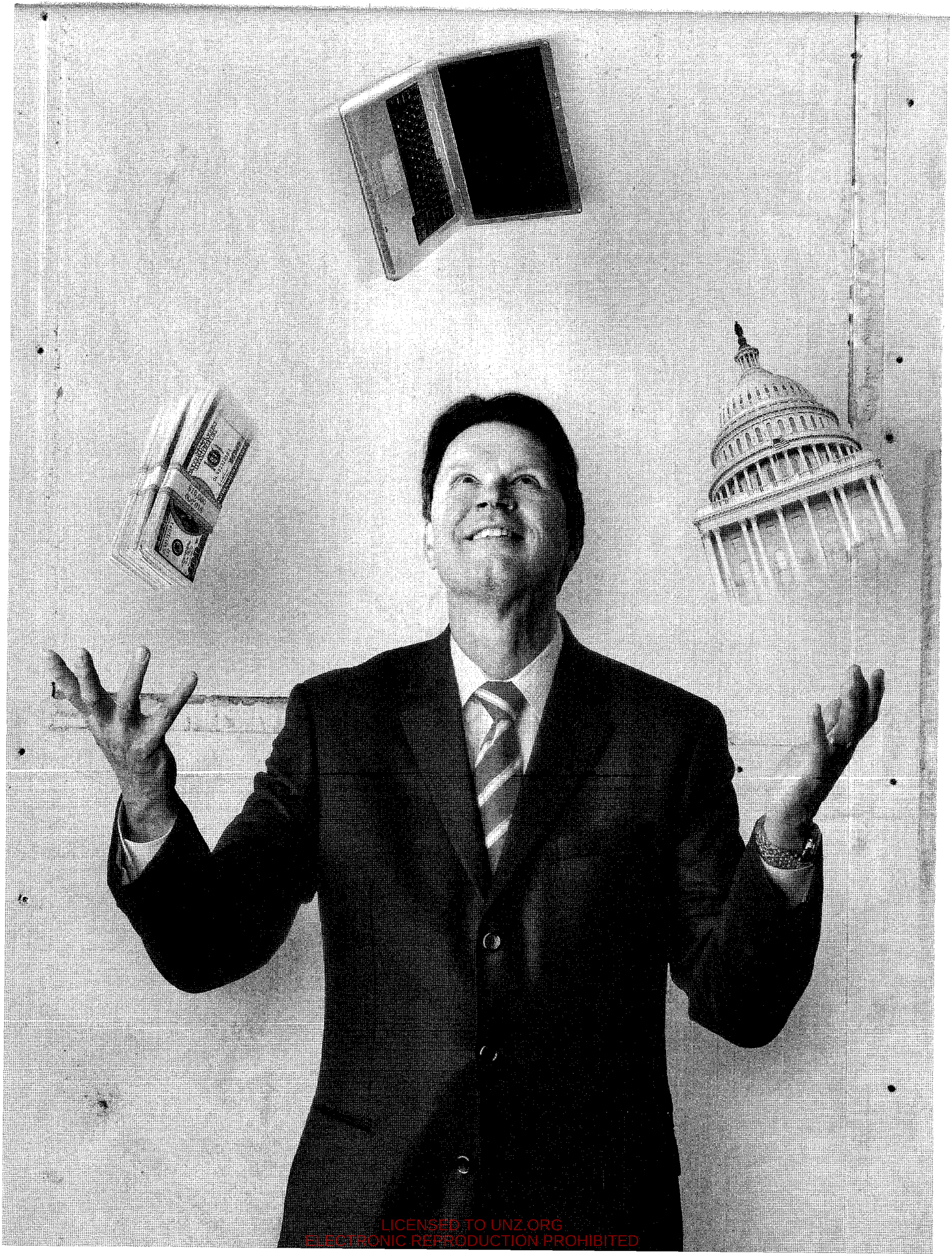


Juggling Act

The politics of science in education research

Two education bills from George W. Bush's first term are long overdue for reauthorization. One, of course, is the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), passed in late 2001. The other is the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA), which in November 2002 replaced the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) with a new Institute of Education Sciences (IES).

The first bill is already iconic: a Lexis-Nexis search covering NCLB since its passage quickly overloads and shuts itself down. No such difficulties, however, hamper a hunt for stories about IES. Half of the meager fourscore hits produced by the agency's title turn out to be for a similarly named organization in Angola. Searching instead for IES director Grover "Russ" Whitehurst only confirms that many high school sports teams have a Whitehurst on the roster. It seems safe to say that IES is operating well under the radar of mainstream media attention.

But as the organization responsible for putting the "scientifically based" in the scientifically based research mandated by NCLB—not to mention the home of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—IES deserves attention in its own right. With Whitehurst moving to the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution after his term expires this month, and as drafts for IES reauthorization begin to make the Beltway rounds, it is time to assess the contribution of IES to the history of federal education research and look ahead to its future.

At best, education research is hard to do well: it studies a field in which all else is too rarely equal, one often driven not by facts but by values and aspiration. "Scientific" study of education at the federal level is thus a difficult mission. Achieving it has been made harder still by the inability of a succession of research agencies to withstand pressures to politicize or gain significant funding. Lawmakers constantly tout the virtues of the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) when discussing what they want from education research, but they have just as constantly failed to endow that vision with either firewalls or cash.

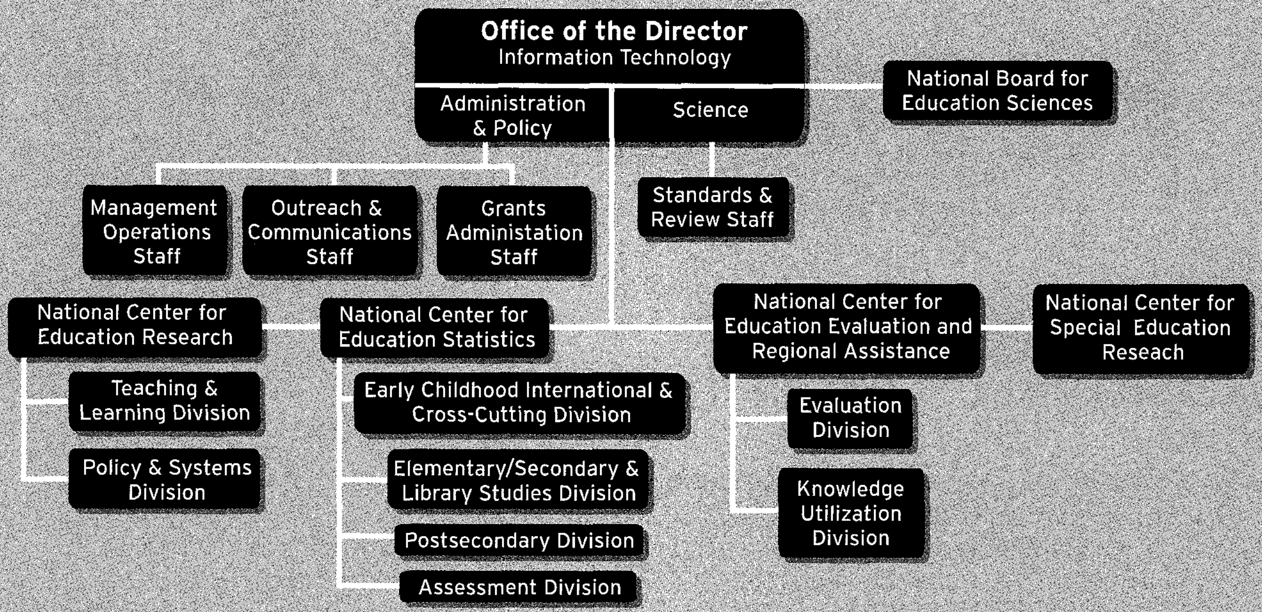
IES, however, has a structure that heightens its autonomy from political interference. Whitehurst has used the opening provided to promote a new culture of favored research that, while sometimes narrow in methodological scope, has changed the conversation in the research community about rigor and relevance—and thus changed, at least at the margins, the research enterprise itself.

BY ANDREW RUDALEVIGE

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION / JOHN WEBER
PHOTOGRAPHY / RHODA BAER

Institute of Education Sciences (IES) (Figure 1)

A small but complicated office, unduly so perhaps.


Office of the Director
Information Technology
Administration & Policy
Science
National Board for Education Sciences
Management Operations Staff
Outreach & Communications Staff
Grants Administration Staff
Standards & Review Staff
National Center for Education Research
National Center for Education Statistics
National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance
National Center for Special Education Reseach
Teaching & Learning Division
Policy & Systems Division
Early Childhood International & Cross-Cutting Division
Elementary/Secondary & Library Studies Division
Postsecondary Division
Assessment Division
Evaluation Division
Knowledge Utilization Division

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education

Still, has education research managed to move from tracing a vicious circle to a virtuous one? With new sets of policymakers—in the White House, Congress, and IES itself—taking office after the 2008 elections, the real tests may be yet to come.

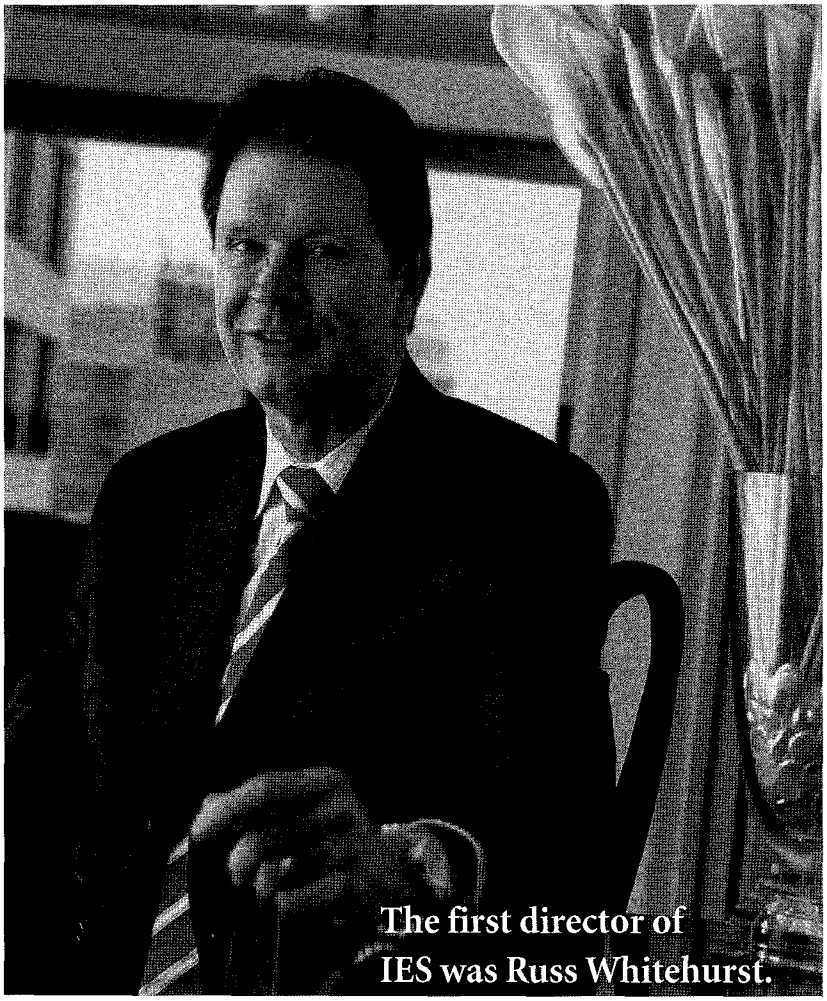
Truth vs. Partisanship

President Hoover's 1931 advisory committee on education grandly proclaimed the battle of "Truth vs. Partisanship." Education policy "cannot hope to rise above partisanship," it argued, "...unless mere differences of opinion, tenaciously held, are dissolved by revelations of pertinent facts established by scientific method and presented in understandable terms." The Hoover committee thus summed up two truths about federal education research. First, rhetoric elevating the methodical quest for the scientific truths underlying education and its outcomes would echo repeatedly throughout the decades that followed. Second, its reality would fall far short. Even though a desire to collate and diffuse "statistics and facts" about education motivated the creation in 1867 of the earliest national department of education, research neither before Hoover nor since has ever achieved the status his advisors envisioned.

Indeed, at the turn of the 19th century, the first Office of Education (OE), by virtue of its placement in the Interior Department, spent more effort administering the breeding of Alaskan reindeer than driving or disseminating education research. (The reindeer would depart for greener bureaucratic pastures in 1907.) Periodic efforts to bolster OE's clout did not take hold until after World War II. The faith in scientific research inspired by the war, afterward institutionalized in the likes of the NSF and the NIH, soon spread to education. In the 1960s, a series of research-and-development centers and then regional educational laboratories was rapidly established. But soon a grander proposal was in play—a plan, as Lee Sproull and her coauthors describe in *Organizing an Anarchy*, born "out of frustration with the failure of OE and belief in the power of scientific research." The driving force was Nixon aide Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who had realized (he wrote in 1969) that "almost nothing is known about education." OE had inadequate resources or autonomy to do much about this, and Moynihan convinced the president to seek creation of a powerful independent research organization. Nixon's subsequent message to Congress stressed the application of "science...to the techniques of teaching" and outlined an independent National Institute of Education (NIE) that would hire a "permanent staff of outstanding scholars" from across the sciences, contract with other researchers, and serve as "a focus for educational research and experimentation." As such, the president anticipated a quarter-billion-dollar annual appropriation. The Budget Bureau's

Emerson Elliott, who became acting director of NIE, says it aimed even higher: "it was formulated by Moynihan as a billion dollar agency."

Things didn't work out that way. Michael Timpane, NIE director in the Carter administration, later said the agency "inherited at best a mixed bag of research projects, was slow to organize, inexpert at explaining itself, and soon fell from political grace." As an indicator of the latter plunge, consider that Nixon's $250 million agency netted $70 million in fiscal 1975 and barely $50 million 10 years later. Across 13 years NIE had six directors plus five acting directors, and was subject to constant reorganization and political intrusion. President Reagan fired its entire advisory board, despite its members' statutory fixed terms, and his first director was most noted for decrying the "false" premise "that education is a science, whose progress depends on systematic research..."



The first director of IES was Russ Whitehurst. Whitehurst's strong academic credentials broadcast his methodological predilections.

In 1985, however, Secretary of Education William Bennett merged NIE and NCES into OERI. OERI head Chester Finn, as an aide to Moynihan, had helped create NIE; now he helped put it out of its misery.

Finn's greatest success was in revamping NCES as an authoritative source for neutral data (see "Troublemaker," *features*, Spring 2008). But the labs and centers, with which Finn waged war over earmarking, returned those attacks with political interest. And over time, the OERI suffered from some of the same problems as NIE. It had frequent changes of leadership; new monies it received were encumbered by new duties. The agency remained politically permeable and legislatively micromanaged.

On cue, the rhetorical cycle began again: OERI needed to be "depoliticized," Rep. Major Owens (D-New York) argued in 1991, "so that... research activities can gain the kinds of credibility and support they merit." Owens favored the restoration of a powerful independent policy board; others, gazing at the NSF/NIH grail, wanted to organize around distinct "institutes" within the agency, each focused on a different educational ill. Five of these were ultimately created, but not supported. Bush OERI director Christopher Cross argued that the institutes would need $50 million—each. But funding in fiscal year 1996 totaled just $43 million.

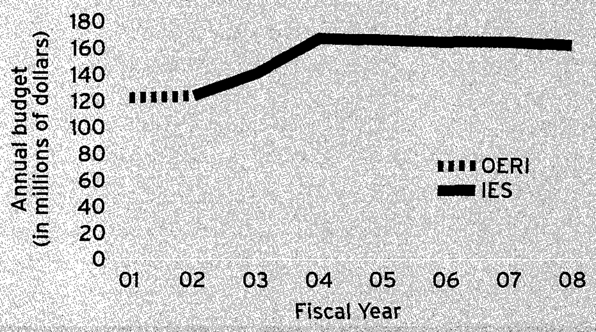
By the time reauthorization came due again, OERI was in trouble. The Clinton administration decision to use OERI to develop and oversee a system of voluntary national tests drew renewed accusations that the agency had been politicized for the president's policy purposes, and the GOP-led Congress finally forced the issue out of the agency's jurisdiction; Rep. Michael Castle (R-Delaware) would soon charge OERI with a long list of familiar sins, including "the creeping influence of short-lived partisan or political operatives, the funding and dissemination of questionable studies...and...no real sense of mission, mired by duplicative programs and competing interests." In the fight between truth and partisanship, partisanship had won yet another round.

The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002

Unexpectedly, though, as a new iteration of the research function took shape, what political scientist Terry Moe

IES Budget Maxed Out? (Figure 2)

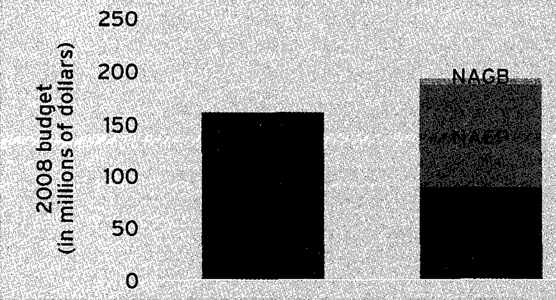
Though the research budget for IES increased for the first two years after the passage of the Education Sciences Reform Act in 2002, appropriations have remained essentially flat since 2004.



SOURCE: Institute of Education Sciences

How Important Is Research? (Figure 3)

Some perceive ill will toward the IES and cite as evidence the 2008 IES research budget, which is less than the combined budgets for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB).



SOURCE: Institute of Education Sciences

calls "the politics of bureaucratic structure" actually worked to promote agency insulation. There were various reasons for this, among them the fruitful foray into the study of reading by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the centrality of such "scientifically based research" in the concurrent debate over the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. President Bush praised ESRA as "an important complement" to NCLB that would "substantially strengthen the scientific basis" of classroom teaching. Likewise, the Democratic legislators so crucial to the passage of NCLB made ESRA bipartisan as well. As research became salient, so did "good" research, and as the congressional debate over education became inseparable from a broad endorsement of "accountability," an autonomous IES became a marker of members' commitment to that cause.

Accordingly, Castle's first draft of ESRA in 2000 envisioned a National Academy for Education Research, Statistics, Evaluation, and Information independent of the Department of Education, run by a director serving a fixed term. Each of its three centers (for research, statistics, and evaluation) would be headed by a presidential appointee also serving a fixed term and under statutory stricture to guarantee that agency activities were "free from ideological agendas and undue political influence." Intriguingly, what constituted valid research was to be mandated in law. Quantitative hypotheses, for instance, had to be "evaluated using experimental designs in which individuals, entities, programs, or activities are assigned to different conditions with appropriate controls to evaluate the effects of the condition of interest through random assignment experiments, or other designs to the extent such designs contain within-condition or across-condition controls."

The end product retained key features of this first draft. But a series of changes was made over time. The academy was moved back into the department, becoming the Institute of Education Sciences, but retained its independent director, who gained appointment powers over the centers' commissioners—except, notably, at NCES. The definition of "scientifically based research standards" for education wound up less proscriptive than in earlier drafts, but still limited causal claims to research designs that could bear their weight. A new advisory board (the National Board for Education Sciences, or NBES) was given formal approval powers over the institute's long-term research priorities and its mandated strengthened peer-review process. And for the first time, a majority of the board was to be composed of researchers, rather than practitioners or other consumers of research (see Figure 1).

The first director of IES, moving over from OERI, was Russ Whitehurst. Whitehurst's strong academic credentials broadcast his methodological predilections. He came to the Bush administration from the quantitatively minded psychology department at SUNY-Stony Brook with a long scholarly record that included stints editing research journals and serving as academic director of the Merrill-Palmer Institute. Per the mission statement of the latter, IES would be led by someone dedicated to "evidence-based programs and interventions" and the models that probed them.

The First Authorization Cycle

In the fall of 2006, IES received what an *Education Week* survey termed "mixed, but mostly positive, grades"; and the follow-up here likewise found widespread praise, leavened with caution. All sides agree that the six years since ESRA was passed have been consequential ones for education research.

Fans of IES tend to praise a new sense of agency independence and, not unrelated, a renewed emphasis on scientific rigor. IES has more structural autonomy than its predecessors; and below the surface the agency's authority is also much improved, former OERI head Kent McGuire says, in ways that are "not sexy but critical." In one telling shift, the director shot up the bureaucratic ranks to Level II on the executive schedule. That placed the position just one rung beneath the secretary and, by no coincidence, at the same rank as the director of NSF. (Assistant secretaries, by contrast, are normally at Level IV.) The ability to hire personnel outside civil service constraints and to roll funds over multiple fiscal years has been equally helpful. So too has language in ESRA that gives the director explicit authority to prepare and publish research and evaluation reports "without the approval of the Secretary or any other office of the Department."

Thus if, as Finn argues, "three things matter in Washington, in terms of autonomy: the ability to manage your own money; to manage your own people; and to manage your own words," IES has made important strides on all three fronts. One insider notes the dramatic contrast between the "most *partisan* Department of Education I have seen since 1988, and the most *independent* research and stats agency."

IES has taken advantage of this independence to drive changes in expectations and values in the research community. The agency's grant-review process was revamped to one Whitehurst says was "explicitly modeled on NIH," emphasizing separation of the peer review and contracting processes and requiring agency reports to be peer reviewed before publication. The change in vocabulary has been striking: loud language touting the "rigorous scientific standards" set forth in statute emanates constantly from IES, relentlessly pressing the importance of randomized, controlled trials as the "gold standard" for judging whether and how a given intervention is effective. The online What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) judges "what works" with regard to curricular interventions on this basis alone. Blasted by high-volume endorsements of experimental design, researchers may be forgiven for feeling like Manuel Noriega in his 1989 Panama compound.

Some, of course, are clapping along to that beat; the quantitatively minded choir to which IES could preach has been a growing part of the education research community. But there are many others dubious of what they see as the myopic focus of IES. For them, the IES mantra of "transformation" via "evidence-based intervention" amounts (ironically enough) to a sort of faith-based program, an unrealistically dogmatic view of what should count as research. Instead, they argue, as former OERI head Sharon Robinson puts it, "you have to have a range of methods and rigor in all methodologies" and that an exclusive approach created mistrust in large segments of the education establishment, instead of "enlarging the political army." Further, Knowledge Alliance's Jim Kohlmoos argues that "the irony is that as you insulate [the agency]—which is a positive thing, in my opinion—you run the risk of becoming less relevant" to the world of practice. This connection, of course, is one of the things that WWC is designed to enhance; that it is not uniformly seen as doing so remains a concern. (Recently a parallel, and peppier, site titled Doing What Works has arisen in the department—not in IES, though it uses IES research.)

Suggesting these views had at least some traction on the Hill, early House drafts of NCLB reauthorization tinkered with the standard for scientifically based research, weakening its focus on experiments. A recent proposal for reauthorization approved by the IES advisory board, the National Board for Education Sciences, tweaks the language back again to reemphasize that causal claims can be made "only in well-designed and implemented random assignment experiments, when feasible."

Even those who resent that focus must concede that IES practices what it preaches. The agency has rarely parroted the lines scripted by its political bosses or industrial heavyweights: Whitehurst was careful to cast caveats upon education secretary Margaret Spellings's claims that rising student test scores in 2005 offered "proof" of NCLB's effectiveness, adding in 2007 that widely divergent state standards for "proficiency" in fact made it hard to judge NCLB's impact. While the administration has strongly pushed phonics-based reading curricula, IES gave positive marks to the rival Reading Recovery program and later reported ambivalent if still preliminary results for Reading First (a broader report on this topic is due in late 2008). And WWC found in 2007 that expensively touted math texts and test-preparation software had little effect on student outcomes: textbook superpower Houghton Mifflin's elementary mathematics curriculum, for instance, was "found to have no discernible effects on...achievement."

Such insulation is good for the perceived integrity of the institute. Even congressional Democrats, angered by what they see as the gross politicization of science agencies under the Bush administration, make an exception for IES. But being apolitical takes special political skill. Otherwise—as with the initial Reading First report—it runs the risk of antagonizing potential allies, and of cooling ardor for institute initiatives and departmental appropriations (see Figure 2). (Reading First funds have been cut from $1 billion to $393 million to, possibly, zero in 2009, and IES's own funding has been flat since fiscal 2004.) It can mean, too, that the institute does not participate in shaping legislation with important ramifications for research, such as the NCLB reauthorization.

Over time, however, as Whitehurst's tenure lengthened vis-à-vis latecomers to the administration, his role of honest if prickly broker has garnered more deference. Time, too, has helped soften the edges between Whitehurst's focus on quantitative experimental methodology and those pushing more immediate "relevance" over his brand of "rigor." Sharon Robinson concedes, "They've come a long way toward lowering the guard and righting the rhetoric," and Whitehurst himself seemed to be channeling his inner Robinson in February, when he told an American Enterprise Institute conference that education is "richly contextual and multivariate" and that research should encompass a "panoply of existing techniques."

Still, moving toward reauthorization, IES must deal with concerns from at least two corners of the education research constituency. On one side are partisans of the regional centers and labs first created in the 1960s. Under IES the centers have seen their funding cut and the scope of their research tightened; the labs have been pushed to supplement with experimental research their traditional role of local dissemination and "rapid response" technical assistance. Whitehurst argues that while Congress should determine what it wants to know, IES should determine how to find that out. But the labs, especially, originally set up to maximize local political support, have always done so; and their customers, officials used to receiving quick customized help, have not always been pleased with the changes at IES. Indeed, the Democratic addendum to ESRA notes that protecting the regional system was "a critical priority." Those members are now in the majority.

Coming from another angle are those who fear for the independence of the National Center for Education Statistics. Recall that the head of NCES differs from other IES commissioners in being a Senate-confirmed presidential appointee with a fixed term. The idea is to give the job additional status and independence, even from IES, placing yet one more barrier between politics and data. As a guardian of statistical information, NCES holds its main aim to be the integrity and credibility of that data; it should have little to say about its analysis.

But the managerial messiness of this has never pleased Whitehurst, and IES has sat rather heavily astride both NCES inputs (especially hiring) and outputs (its publications). NBES's proposed reauthorization language goes further, making the NCES commissioner an appointee of the IES director, though dismissible only for cause. Advisory board chair Robert Granger argues that this is "a more rational model," creating efficient lines of accountability and ensuring that the director and commissioner will be compatible. Whitehurst suggests that having a presidential appointee at NCES could prove more problematic, not less, in terms of partisan influence, without the director to buffer the commissioner from political winds.

One could foresee circumstances in which this would be true. But in general the proposal runs counter to the long-standing recommendations of the National Research Council and its guide to *Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency*. Certainly the heft of a presidential appointment is useful to the NCES commissioner in bureaucratic dealings. More broadly, statistical agencies, in this view, are qualitatively different, not to be treated, as Elliott puts it, as "just another government agency." Even such a fan of managerial efficiency as the Office of Management and Budget, whose program evaluation gives both IES and NCES coveted (and rare) grades of "effective," feels that "real and perceived independence" is best served by the current system.

The drive by IES for managerial (and budgetary?) control also seeks to alter the complicated relationship between NCES and the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), which oversees the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAGB has autonomy regarding the conduct and presentation of NAEP, but proposed changes would give most of that power to NCES, which would itself be under the thumb of IES. NCES would be happy to get the envisioned authority in the proposed language, if limits on its own autonomy were not part of the deal, but the current system is intentionally uncomfortable, dividing authority in a way that is itself insulating.

Looking Ahead

It seems unlikely, given current sentiment on the Hill, that these changes will receive legislative sanction. But there will be plenty of time for the debate to play out. Few expect much progress on ESRA reauthorization even in 2009, pending movement of the equally late NCLB reauthorization. As that approaches, it is worth remembering Whitehurst's hopeful testimony in 2002 that "we are close to a point where the right investment in the right structure could get us close to a tipping point, where education becomes an evidence-based field." Has that occurred?

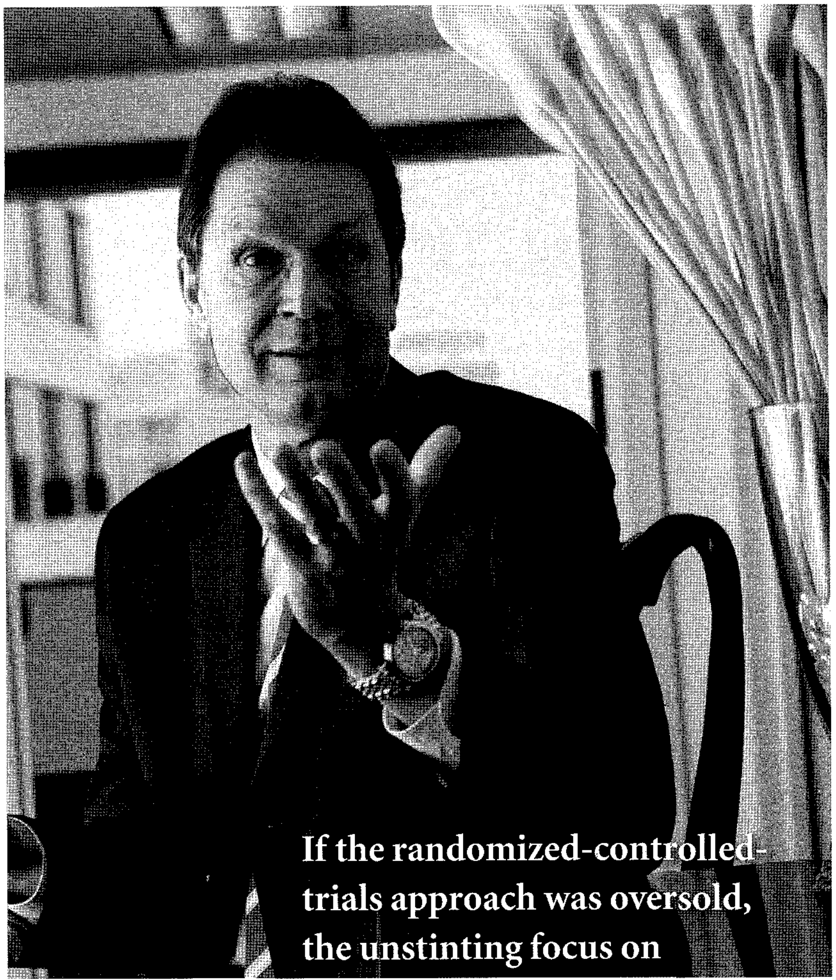
The quick descent to technical minutiae in the discussions already occurring on reauthorization actually bodes well on this point. Early murmurings suggested the new ESRA could be passed, as a noncontroversial measure, in order to clear the congressional decks for NCLB. This didn't happen, of course, but even informal designation as "noncontroversial" suggests IES has come a long way. There are few questions about its basic structure. Legislators seem serious about avoiding confirmation of a partisan hack to the IES directorship, when that job opens up. So far, insulation remains good politics.

But politics lurk close. In a months-long tussle between IES and Congress over the evaluation of Upward Bound, IES insisted that a robust test of whether the program made a difference to students required a control group—students eligible for but not served by it. This meant some students would be recruited for Upward Bound but denied participation. And lawmakers decried that as unethical and "discriminatory," even comparing it, ominously (if inaccurately), to the infamous Tuskegee syphilis experiments. In early 2008 the evaluation was canceled.

Whitehurst called the legislative intervention "a terrific mistake." On scientific grounds, he was right. But as he conceded, "We produced some of these problems for ourselves," in part by centering on a single kind of evaluative procedure and by failing to consult with the advocacy community and Congress in advance before grappling with a popular program.

Will "the Upward Bound problem...be contained to Upward Bound," as Whitehurst later insisted? Probably so, but it nonetheless showed how easily breached is agency autonomy when its exercise roils partisan waters. Further, if a director as experienced as Whitehurst could stumble into this sort of controversy, how will his greener successor fare? Some of Whitehurst's effectiveness, and leeway, is a matter of longevity and related learning (on all sides) that will have to be repeated after the transition. Given ESRA's tight association with NCLB, the crumbling consensus around the latter will bring new pitfalls to navigate.

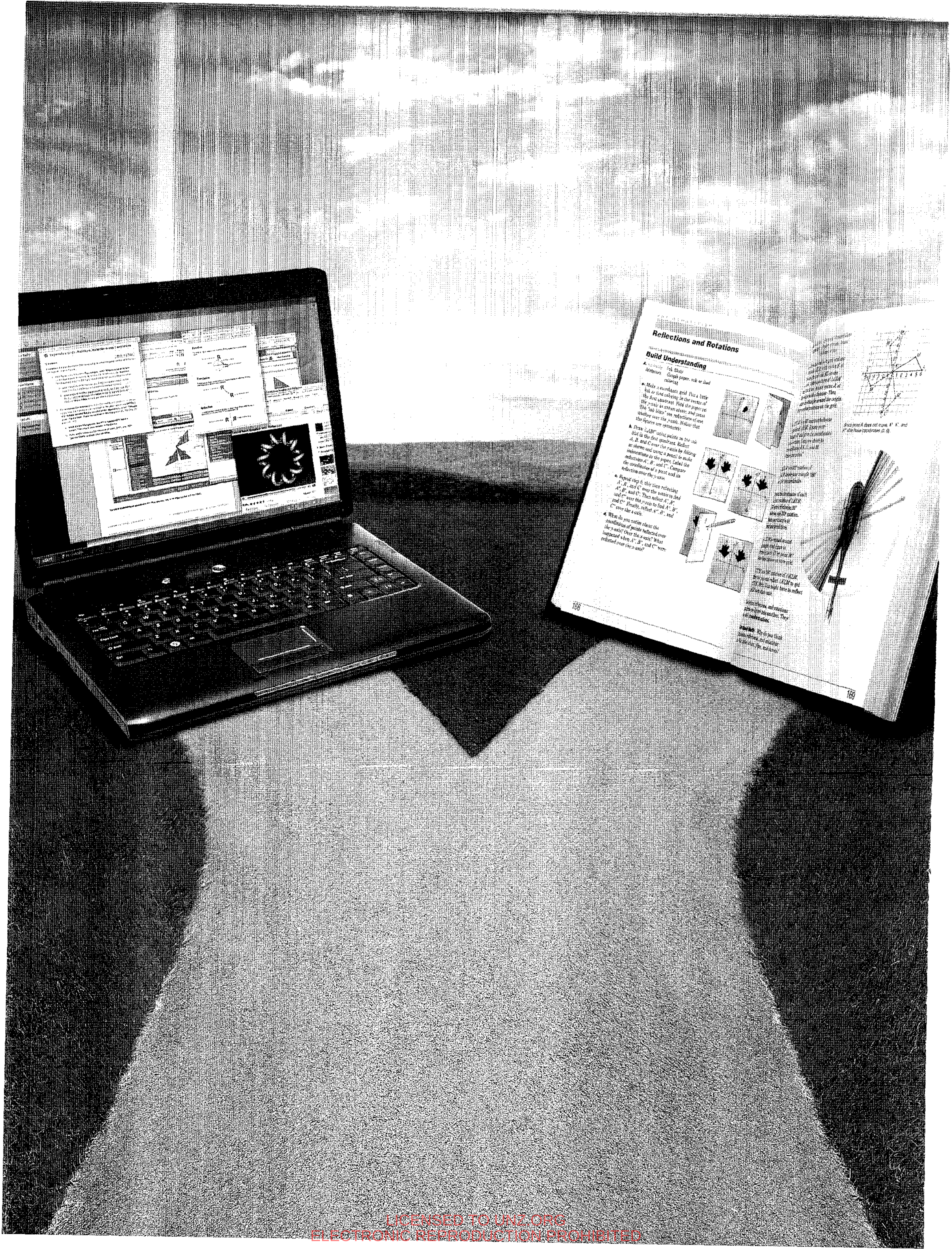
Whatever November's outcome, January 2009 will bring major changes to Washington. It is not clear that it is worth betting the structural house on things having changed for good. Indeed, in purely practical terms, the IES budget is not big enough to tip the field of education research on its own. Structure matters, but so do resources; and the politics of knowledge is no different from politics as a whole—defined, as Harold Laswell put it long ago, by who gets what, when, and how. By this standard, IES is distinctly undercapitalized (see Figure 3). The institute's funding (for research and dissemination) is up by a third compared to the final days of OERI, to $160 million or so; that said, that level was achieved in fiscal 2004 and has hardly budged since. The bipartisan NCLB commission proposed doubling that amount. And in its draft reauthorization bill, NBES proposes that IES become a $1 billion agency as of fiscal 2009, finally meeting Pat Moynihan's 1970 vision. Of course, a billion 1970 dollars equates to some $5.3 billion today. Some advocates argue that to parallel corporate research-and-development budgets the figure should really be 2 percent of overall investment, or something like $10 billion.



If the randomized-controlled-trials approach was oversold, the unstinting focus on promoting scientific rigor, even through a single lens, must still be viewed as broadly positive.

That those numbers sound utopian speaks to the need for new political dexterity at IES that also maintains its scientific integrity. Still, Whitehurst and IES can take pride in having made a solid start. If the randomized-controlled-trials approach was oversold, this has served to move the field by force, further and faster, toward recognizing the need for rigorous research standards generally. The unstinting focus on promoting scientific rigor, even through a single lens, must thus be viewed as broadly positive. And if these changes are, ultimately, at the margins, in American politics that is where most change occurs. The institution is in place: the next administration, next Congress, and next director will have the chance to institutionalize it.

Andrew Rudalevige is associate professor of political science at Dickinson College. This article is adapted from "Structure and Science in Education Research," in Frederick Hess, ed., When Research Matters *(Harvard Education Press, 2008).*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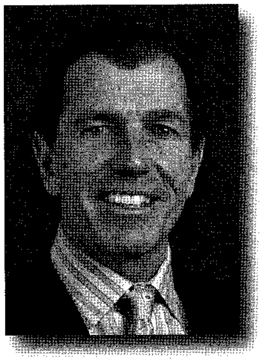
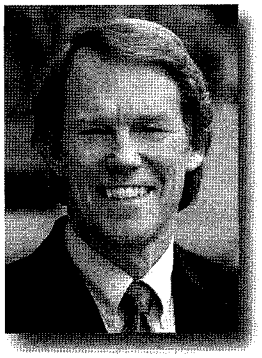
Education Next
talks to
JOHN CHUBB,
TERRY MOE,
and
LARRY CUBAN

Virtual Schools

Will education technology change the nature of learning?

Can new education technologies short-circuit change-resistant politics and remake our schools? Or are well-intended advocates once again overhyping the ability of electrons and processors to solve thorny problems of teaching and learning? In this *Education Next* forum, John Chubb of Edison Schools and Stanford University political scientist Terry Moe make the case for the transformative power of today's technology. Twenty years ago, this duo coauthored the debate-changing *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*. Their new book, *Liberating Learning: Technology, Politics, and the Future of American Education*, lays out a bold vision of the future. A more skeptical view of technology's potential impact on education is offered by Larry Cuban, professor emeritus of education at Stanford University and author of *Oversold and Underused: Computers in the Classroom*.


JOHN CHUBB


TERRY MOE

LARRY CUBAN

EDUCATION NEXT: How likely is it that technology will make advances in education in the next decade that go far beyond any changes that have taken place in the past?

John Chubb and Terry Moe: The worldwide revolution in information technology has globalized the international economy, made communication virtually instantaneous and costless, put vast storehouses of information within reach of everyone on the planet, and in countless other ways transformed how life is lived. Technology is destined to transform American education as well. The driver of change is simple enough: technology has enormous benefits for the learning process, and they promise to change the nature of schooling and heighten its productivity. Curricula, teaching methods, and schedules can

ILLUSTRATION / THIRD EYE IMAGES, LONNIE BUSCH/CONRAD ZOBEL

Technology is going to have transformative effects not only on education, but also on politics—effects that will weaken the opponents of change and open the political gates.
—JC and TM

all be customized to meet the learning styles and life situations of individual students; education can be freed from the geographic constraints of districts and brick-and-mortar buildings; coursework from the most remedial to the most advanced can be made available to everyone; students can have more interaction with teachers and one another; parents can readily be included in the education process; sophisticated data systems can measure and guide performance; and schools can be operated at lower cost with technology (which is relatively cheap) substituted for labor (which is relatively expensive).

But the advance of technology is also threatening to powerful education groups, and they will resist it in the political process. Precisely because technology promises to transform the core components of schooling, it is inevitably disruptive to the jobs, routines, and resources of the people whose livelihoods derive from the existing system. And these people are represented by organizations—most prominently, the teachers unions—that are extraordinarily powerful in politics, and are even now taking action to prevent technology from transforming American education.

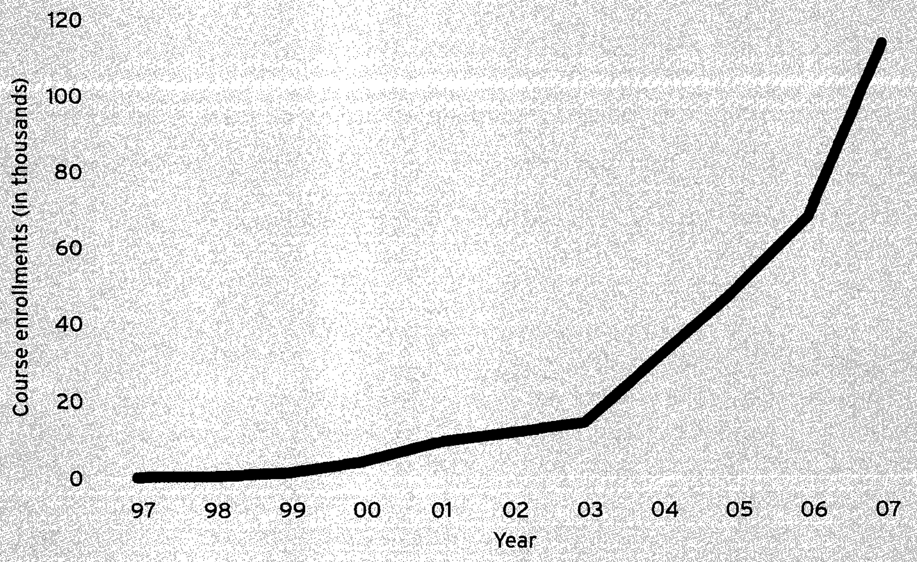
Such resistance is not new. Technology is just the latest target of their politics of blocking. The key question is whether this resistance can be overcome. And the answer, as we will later explain, is yes. Technology is going to have transformative effects not only on education, but also on politics—effects that will weaken the opponents of change and open the political gates. This is the real crux of the story. In the years ahead, it is the political transformation that will make the educational transformation possible.

Larry Cuban: Technology is linked to progress in the American mind and has a rich history in the culture. Because both public and private schooling have been deeply embedded in society for the past three centuries, educational technology (by which I mean the various communication and information devices and processes that

Virtual School, Real Growth

(Figure 1)

The Florida Virtual School has seen course enrollments grow dramatically, from 77 at its 1997 inception to 113,900 course enrollments in the 2007–08 school year. While nonpublic school students account for most middle-school enrollments, the much larger enrollment in high school courses is driven by public school students.



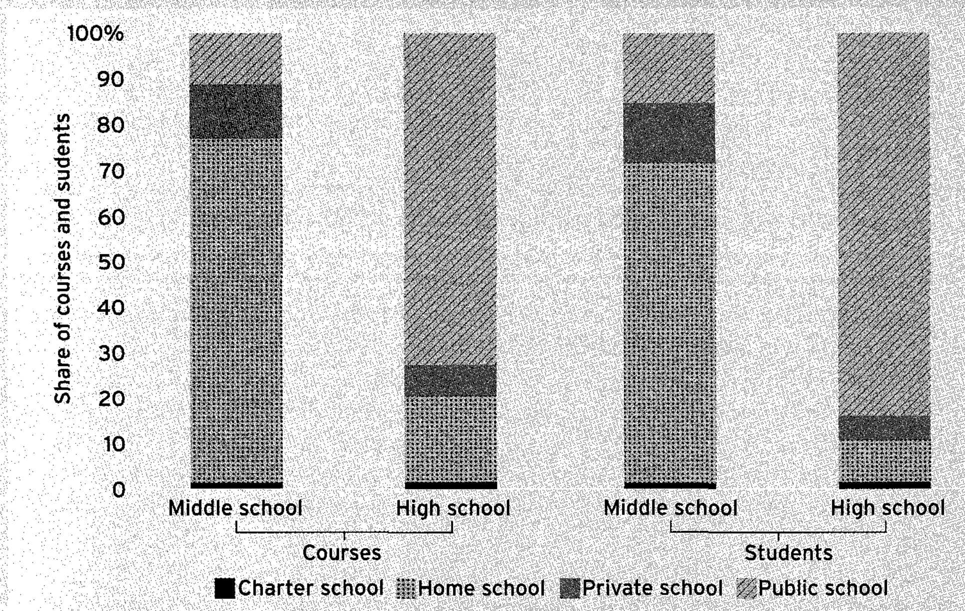
administrators and teachers use to make schooling efficient and effective) also has a rich history (e.g., textbooks, chalkboard, film, radio, computers).

U.S. school reformers have a tradition of overselling and underusing technological innovations. Thus the chances of widespread adoption in schools of new classroom technologies in the next decade are in the 70 to 90 percent probability range, but the probability of routine use in most schools for instruction is much lower, in the 10 to 20 percent range. Through social networks of policymakers, researchers, practitioners, and tech promoters, pace-setting urban and suburban districts adopt innovations and then adapt them to fit the local context and goals. Over time, laggards go through the same process, retaining parts of the innovation, and then move on to the next one. In public schools, changes occur piecemeal and incrementally. Regardless of what technological enthusiasts predict, no "revolutions" in technology use have occurred in U.S. schools and classrooms. But evolution does.

EN: What can we learn from technological adoption in education in the past?

LC: In tracking such technological innovations as film, radio, television, videocassettes, and desktop computers over the past half century, I found a common cycle. First, the promoters' exhilaration splashes over decisionmakers as they purchase and deploy equipment in schools and classrooms. Then academics conduct studies to determine the effectiveness of the innovation as compared to standard practice; they survey teachers and occasionally visit classrooms to see student and teacher use of the innovation. Academics often find that the technological innovation is just as good as—seldom superior to—conventional instruction in conveying information and teaching skills. They also find that classroom use is less than expected. Formal adoption of high-tech innovations does not mean teachers have total access to devices or use them on a daily basis. Such studies often unleash stinging

U.S. school reformers have a tradition of overselling and underusing technological innovations. —*LC*

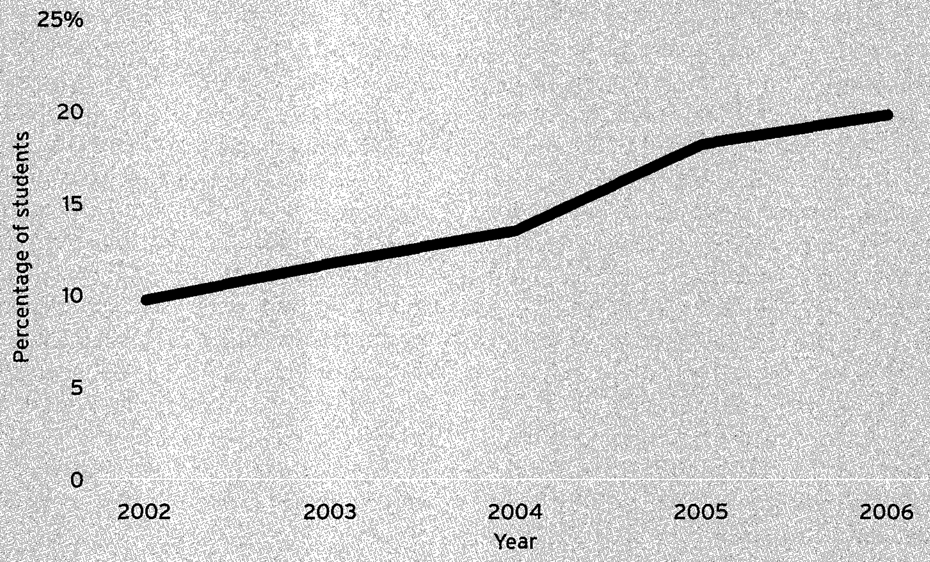


NOTE: Values are based on pooled enrollment data from the 2004-05 and the 2005-06 school years.

SOURCES: Florida Taxwatch

College Students Learning Online (Figure 2)

The percentage of students at U.S. postsecondary institutions taking at least one online course doubled between 2002 and 2006.



SOURCE: I. Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman, "Online Nation: Five Years of Growth in Online Learning," Babson Survey Research Group, October 2007

Technological innovations of the past are in a different league—by many orders of magnitude—from the revolution in information technology.
—JC and TM

rebukes of administrators and teachers for spending scarce dollars on expensive machinery that fails to display superiority over existing techniques of instruction and, even worse, is only occasionally used.

Few earnest champions of classroom technology understand the multiple and complicated roles teachers perform, address the realities of classrooms within age-graded schools, respect teacher expertise, or consider the practical questions teachers ask about any technological innovation that a school board and superintendent decide to adopt, buy, and deploy. Is the new technology simple to use? Versatile? Reliable? Durable? How much energy and time will I as a teacher have to expend to use the new technology for what net return in enhanced student learning? Will the innovation help me solve problems that I face in the classroom? Providing teachers with economic or organizational incentives to use technology won't answer these practical questions. Were policymakers, researchers, designers of the innovation, and business-inspired reformers to ask and then consider answers to these questions, perhaps the predictable cycle might be interrupted.

JC and TM: It is a mistake to view previous technological innovations—television, say—as telling indicators of how information technology will affect the nation's school system. Yes, television has done little to change public education. And yes, the failure to put it to more creative uses does highlight how weak the incentives are among educators for throwing off the chains of tradition.

But television is a simple, one-way conveyor of information that allows for no interaction or input. Its potential for education was limited from the outset. The fact is, television and other technological innovations of the past are in a different league—by many orders of magnitude—from the revolution in information technology. This revolution is not a reform. It is a new social reality.

Today's public educators are part of society. They want to use computers and modernize their schools, and evidence suggests they have been moving in this direction.

But absent competitive pressure, they have incentives to make only the most incremental of changes, those that don't threaten anyone's jobs or disrupt established routines. Their approach to information technology is rooted in the status quo: it is about making the existing system work better without really changing it. In the new social reality, however, this isn't going to cut it. There will be competition. There will be pressure. There will be change.

EN: What, if anything, can we learn from the processes of technological change in other industries?

JC and TM: Dramatic advances in information technology have transformed the products we buy and the business firms that make them. An illuminating perspective on how these changes have come about in private industry can be found in Clayton Christensen's work on "disruptive innovation." Apple, for instance, successfully introduced its personal computer as a toy for children, thus not directly competing with DEC (Digital Equipment Corporation) and other established makers of mainframe and minicomputers. Its market was "nonconsumers": people not being served by the big manufacturers, and for whom the alternative was nothing. In so doing, Apple did not provoke the opposition of the big boys, and personal computers soon flourished.

In *Disrupting Class,* Christensen and coauthors Curtis Johnson and Michael Horn argue that technology will triumph in public education in the same way. Virtual schools, for example, can offer AP physics or remedial math or Mandarin or whatever else local districts are not offering. And they can cater to constituencies—students who are gifted, live in rural or inner city areas, need extra credits for graduation, and so on—that are underserved by the current system. In so doing, virtual schools can compete against nothing (see "How Do We Transform Our Schools," *features*, Summer 2008). And because of budget constraints and parent-student demand, districts and states will welcome these new suppliers and won't see them as threats to be snuffed out (see Figure 1).

We agree that these forces will allow virtual schools to get a foothold in public education, and thus that there is something to learn from private industry. But public education is part of government, and is not subject to the competitive dynamics of the marketplace. The teachers unions and their allies will be wary of contracting out educational services, even to help groups that are currently underserved, because they know where it all leads. Their incentive is to resist. And they will try to use their power to keep the lid on, and maintain control over, the numbers and types of cyberschools that can move into the field. That's why, in the end, it all comes down to politics—and whether the opponents can block.

LC: Manufacturing, banking, and communications are a few of the industries that have been transformed technologically. While public schools and such industries have common characteristics (e.g., leaders, headquarters staff who coordinate and control people, bureaucratic rules, planning for the future, building budgets, providing services), they differ in substantial and fundamental ways. First, their purposes differ. Industries seek profit while tax-supported schools are expected to convert children into adults who are literate, law abiding, engaged in their communities, informed about issues, economically independent, and respectful of differences among Americans. Schools are held publicly responsible for achieving those ends; industries are responsible to shareholders only. Second, in deciding policies, schools are accountable for democratic and public deliberations; even with recent revelations of corrupt practices among CEOs and boards of directors and meltdowns in the mortgage lending community, minimal public oversight of corporate governance currently exists. Finally, the criteria for success differ. Businesses have earning reports and stock prices as measures of success; schools seeking multiple purposes—see above—are expected to show immediate, midterm, and long-term results, many of which are hardly reducible to numbers.

One industry that is outside of K–12 education yet similar to it in its multiple

Few earnest champions of classroom technology understand the multiple and complicated roles teachers perform.
—LC

public purposes and has unreservedly embraced computer-based technologies is higher education (see Figure 2). Because higher education is not compulsory and adults enroll voluntarily in colleges and universities, market incentives come into play. Colleges and universities look for a competitive edge that will give them an advantage in their market niche. Both public and private institutions seek to attract students and faculty and increase their prestige among similarly situated schools. Moreover, higher education is largely nonunion.

Whereas some of these institutions go for the working adult market (e.g., University of Phoenix) with extensive online course offerings, most colleges and universities remain research and teaching organizations with online courses that are marginal to their core operations. Still, nearly every professor and student has at least one computer available daily (many have two or more). For universities and four-year colleges, computers have transformed academic research and analysis in the natural and social sciences, humanities, and professional schools.

The puzzle is teaching, which has not been transformed. Classroom instruction for large groups of students (25 or more) across community colleges, state universities, and elite institutions differs little from what occurs in secondary public schools. That fact suggests that even with abundant access to new technologies, competitive market pressures, no union interference, and enormous encouragement from institutional policymakers, constancy in patterns of teaching sets the education context apart from those industries that have experienced top-to-bottom technological transformation.

EN: Do you think that technological change is likely to increase significantly the amount of home schooling? Why or why not?

LC: Cyberschools and distance education have increasingly connected isolated rural students and home-schooled children to teachers and resources that were heretofore unavailable to them. Slight increases in home schooling may occur—say from 1.1 million students in 2003 to 2 or 3 million by the end of the decade. The slight uptick would be due to both the availability of technology and a far broader menu of choices for parents. Online college curricula and offerings from for-profit entrepreneurs give home-schooling, anxious college-driven, and rural parents new options. Even though cheerleaders for distance learning have predicted wholesale changes in conventional site-based schools for decades, such changes will occur at the periphery, not the center. Most parents will continue to send their children to brick-and-mortar public schools and expect those schools to achieve the many goals mentioned above. I do not predict that most high school students will enroll in online schools. Yes, many will take a course here and there, but the comprehensive high school in most suburban districts and proliferation of small high schools in urban systems will continue to enroll the vast majority of eligible teenagers.

JC and TM: With the advance of technology, home schooling is destined to increase—and decrease. It will increase because distance learning will offer a vast array of new opportunities, and learning from "home"—from anywhere but the school building—will gain dramatically in popularity. Many more students will take all their classes through virtual schools. But more important, the great majority of American students will ultimately choose to take some of their classes remotely and some through brick-and-mortar schools.

On the other hand, far fewer kids will be home schooled in the traditional sense. In the past, home schooling meant that parents taught their kids at home. But in the coming years, almost all the kids who study entirely "at home" actually will be "going to school": schools that have well-developed curricula and bona fide teachers and administrators, but operate at a distance.

In the future, then, home schooling as we know it will largely cease to exist, and the boundaries between learning at home and public schooling will essentially break down. American education will become a blend of "home schooling"—differently construed—

In the future, American education will become a blend of "home schooling" —differently construed—and brick-and-mortar public schooling. —JC and TM and brick-and-mortar public schooling. Most students will do some of their academic coursework outside the brick-and-mortar setting—making home schooling a very mainstream activity—and traditional home schoolers will be more fully integrated into the larger education system (see "Home Schooling Goes Mainstream," *features*, p. 10).

All of this will be resisted by the unions and their allies, because today's home schoolers are not part of current education budgets, and as they join the system they are competitors for scarce resources. But long term, as technology changes the balance of political power, the resistance will fail.

EN: Are charter schools, private schools, or afterschool programs likely to adopt innovations more rapidly than traditional district schools?

JC and TM: The early adopters will arise from outside the traditional public school system. Most important are charter schools that deliver education entirely over the Internet. Nearly 200 of these virtual schools have already sprung up in 19 states, serving almost 200,000 students, and the trajectory is sharply upward. Some individual schools have grown spectacularly fast, such as PA Cyber, which enrolls 8,000 students only eight years after opening.

As students enroll in cybercharters, they stimulate a growing market for more and better online technologies and content. They also put competitive pressure on traditional public schools to innovate or lose students and revenue. These high-tech newcomers add to the competitive pressure already created by some 4,000 brick-and-mortar charters operating in 40 states, broadening the constituency for charter schools beyond families disaffected with inner-city public schools.

Competition from early adopters, coupled with performance pressures arising from accountability reforms, will force all schools—including private schools and low-tech charter schools resting on their laurels—to consider technological solutions. Change will not be even or uniform. It will occur faster and more consequentially in districts and states where unions are weak, where parent demand and involvement are high, where unmet needs are greatest, and where budgets are tightly constrained. But as the tide begins to rise, and as the balance of power in politics begins to shift with it, the other districts and states will eventually follow.

LC: Except for those public charter schools, magnets, and theme-driven schools that advertise themselves as using technology, including those operated by for-profit and nonprofit organizations such as High Tech High, Edison, and Mosaica, I have not found charter or private schools (a highly diverse sector made up of elite independents and sectarian and nonsectarian schools) more open (or closed) to technological innovations than public schools. Increased competition from charter schools may have modest to strong effects in urban districts (but not suburban or rural ones), where a critical mass (one-third or more) of students attend these schools full-time. The same rationale for adoption of computers (e.g., improve achievement, transform teaching and learning, and as preparation for an ever-changing labor market) prevails across public and private school sectors. The critical issues remain teacher involvement in decisions about buying and using devices and available funding, rather than openness to technological innovation. Afterschool programs are another category, since they are tangential to regular public schools and often use technology as an inducement to get students through the door once the last school-day bell rings.

EN: How much of schooling can technology really displace?

LC: It is a mistake to assume that if schools just adopt classroom technologies, academic achievement will improve, teaching will change dramatically, and students will be better prepared for the 21st-century workplace. Evidence for each reason to adopt technology is at best skimpy and at worst missing altogether.

The bedrock of schooling remains an organizational structure introduced in the mid-19th century: the age-graded school, where each teacher has her classroom and students of roughly the same age have to learn a chunk of the curriculum before being promoted to the next grade.
—LC

Brick-and-mortar schools will be very different places than they are today: using more technology, staffed by fewer but more able teachers, working with much better information, and delivering instruction better matched to student needs.
—JC and TM

Many administrative activities can be (and have been) computerized (e.g., purchasing, scheduling, accounting, personnel data). Collecting student performance data and making it easily and readily available to teachers and principals has potential for delivering lessons and individual help to students "just in time." But to achieve the important purposes of tax-supported public schooling, especially in urban districts, the bedrock of schooling remains an organizational structure introduced in the mid-19th century: the age-graded school, where each teacher has her classroom and students of roughly the same age have to learn a chunk of the curriculum before being promoted to the next grade.

Advances in new technologies have hardly made a dent in this permanent structure. Charters, for-profit schools, cyberschools, and private schools embrace the same organizational format. All of the predictions for a technological Nirvana assume that the age-graded school will melt away. It hasn't so far because strong social beliefs about schooling and deeply embedded political and economic structures keep it alive and kicking. It is within the age-graded school that the individual teacher's knowledge, skill repertoire, and experience matter in connecting to her students. That relationship continues to be the moral, social, and cognitive centerpiece for teaching and learning to occur and cannot be replaced by machines, however cleverly constructed. Until the age-graded school and funding mechanisms change, the use of new technologies for classroom instruction will remain peripheral.

JC and TM: Technology will do more than bring high-quality information to bear on the education process. It will change the education process itself, transforming and sometimes replacing the role of the teacher, and altering the core means of instruction. Most schools of the future will be hybrids, with students still taught by teachers in classroom settings—for parts of the day. But students will spend much more time learning directly and often remotely through technology. Young students will require more personal attention. But as students grow up and gain the skills to work independently, the time with technology will increase and the time with teachers will decrease.

Technology will differentiate segments of the learning process. Teachers will often be the first source of instruction, helping kids master core concepts and skills. Then, technology will provide customized remediation for students not able to grasp the core and acceleration for students ready for specialized and enriching extensions. Programs to teach literacy skills, from the essentials of decoding on up, already exist. So, too, do programs to teach math skills, from basic to advanced. More effective differentiation means narrower gaps in achievement. It also means a far greater number and variety of course options—AP, IB, and even university-sponsored—available to all kids, regardless of the community in which they live: technology as equity.

For some students, particularly those who are older, who have special learning needs or academic interests, or whose schedules or locations make it difficult for them to attend brick-and-mortar schools, the core instructional process will be online. School communities, with lots of interaction among students and teachers, will be built virtually. Brick-and-mortar schools will be very different places than they are today: using more technology, staffed by fewer but more able teachers, working with much better information, and delivering instruction better matched to student needs.

EN: What are the most promising innovations in education technology?

LC: Since the 1990s, school boards and superintendents have generally moved swiftly to adopt technological enhancements to administrative functions by placing them online and automating many routine procedures. The collection of individual student achievement data is now possible technologically, and its dissemination to teachers swiftly offers many opportunities for intervention, remedial work, and enrichment. For classroom instruction, many school boards have also adopted interactive whiteboards, student clickers, and handheld devices for teachers and students to collect data for field projects or for what is happening in a classroom. Some highly motivated individual teachers have created imaginative uses of computers for students to learn. Such efforts are promising innovations that can incrementally improve teaching and learning. For-profit schools, that is, schools run by businesses (e.g., Edison Schools), often give students and teachers abundant access to machines and integrate technology use in their overall school design.

The majority of public school teachers, however, view technological innovations as burdensome add-ons. Teachers need to be directly (not as tokens) involved in adopting and using technological innovations and in establishing on-site technical assistance and facilitating teachers-helping-teachers use existing technologies in daily lessons (e.g., Apple Classroom of Tomorrow experience in the 1980s and 1990s; Berkeley [CA] Teacher Led Technology Challenge project in the late 1990s). Such involvement can lead to teachers creatively integrating the innovation into routine classroom instruction. Unfortunately, this approach remains distant from the current mind-set among policy elites and vendors anxious about getting new devices into classrooms.

JC and TM: The most promising innovations can be grouped into two broad categories, instruction and information. As it is, schools are universally organized for kids to get all of their instruction in classes of 20 to 30 led by a teacher. Technology is treated as an add-on to this structure. Elementary kids typically visit a computer lab once a week. A few computers also sit at the backs of classrooms, for kids to use, if time allows, *after* the teacher is finished teaching the core lesson. At the secondary level, computers are largely for word processing and Internet research and have little to do with core courses. It need not be this way.

Every educator knows that kids need individual help. Each student is not going to understand material through the same presentation, with the same exercises, or at the same pace. Technology can teach from multiple angles and with multimedia—animation, simulation, online teachers—and very interactively, with students constantly engaged and providing input. Technology can *customize* instruction literally for every student. Kids could have substantial amounts of customized remediation or acceleration, and even entire courses. Education could be dramatically differentiated.

Until recently, schools were in the Stone Age of information—knowing almost nothing about the achievement of their students or the success of teachers in promoting it. Today, accountability systems require annual student testing in reading and math, and provide objective and reliable (if limited) measures at least once a year. Moreover, technology is fast making it feasible to monitor student progress with online assessments that can be integrated with curricula throughout the school year. Information systems can help teachers adjust their instruction on the fly, reteaching skills that haven't been learned, easing up on skills that students master quickly, and customizing by student.

Administrators can become more effective as well. Information systems can immediately show principals and district officials which classrooms are succeeding and which are struggling, which parts of the curriculum are being learned and which are going over kids' heads. Sophisticated statistical programs can help administrators draw vital inferences about the learning process, especially about the extent to which each teacher is providing "value-added" to students (after allowing for differences in student backgrounds and other influences on learning that teachers can't control). As information becomes available, it will be impossible to ignore, even if it speaks the unspeakable secret that some teachers are highly effective and others are not. As schools are forced to deal with the truth—and pressured to improve—students will benefit.

EN: What role will school boards and teachers unions play in using technology to reform schools? In short, what are the politics of adopting technology?

LC: The politics of adopting new technologies remain a top-down (school board

The majority of public school teachers view technological innovations as burdensome add-ons.
—LC

Unions will resist technology. Their mission is to protect the jobs of teachers in the regular public schools.
—JC and TM

and superintendent), elite-driven (civic and business leaders, vendors) operation largely determined by the district's history of innovation, available resources, and responsiveness to key stakeholders. Unions have played a largely peripheral role in either endorsing (some union chapters have gotten district approval for schools in which new technologies are central) or opposing classroom technological innovations (cybercharter schools, for example). School boards and parents, however, will fight efforts to substitute machines for teachers, even when champions of reducing labor costs dress up the purchase of new technologies as overall savings and a technological Utopia. They will resist such moves because they see the purposes of public schools as more than efficiency and working to bolster a growing economy through supplying skilled graduates.

School boards and parents will fight efforts to substitute machines for teachers, even when champions of reducing labor costs dress up the purchase of new technologies as overall savings and a technological Utopia.
—LC

JC and TM: Unions will resist technology. Their mission is to protect the jobs of teachers in the regular public schools, and real technological change—which outsources work to distant locations, allows students and money to leave, substitutes capital for labor, and in other ways disrupts the existing job structure—is a threat to the security and stability that the unions seek. For decades, the unions and their allies have been the major obstacles to education reform, regularly using their formidable political power to block or weaken the reforms they do not like, from accountability to school choice to pay for performance. No surprise, then, that they are already working to kill or limit virtual charters, and to ensure that technology fits neatly into the status quo.

But this time they won't succeed. Technology has a far-reaching capacity to transform politics. As distance learning proliferates, for example, teachers will be less geographically concentrated in districts, considerably more dispersed, and much more difficult for unions to organize. The substitution of technology for labor will lower the demand for teachers. The teaching profession will become much more diversified and less conducive to sameness and solidarity. There will be many new schools and a dramatic increase in choice and competition. All these developments, operating together in mutually reinforcing ways, will work to sap the organizational strength of the teachers unions, undermine their political power, and weaken their ability to block in the policy process. As they are less and less able to block them, reforms of all kinds—not just those that are high tech—will begin to flow through.

School boards are a bit more nuanced. They clearly do not want to lose students and revenue to cyberschools or other sources of competition. Many board members are also beholden to the unions, which are influential in local elections, and school boards have regularly joined forces with the unions—in the courts and state legislatures—to oppose competitive threats. Yet school boards in districts with especially active parents, weak unions, limited budgets, and kids whose needs are going unmet may have incentives to embrace technological change and become early adopters. In rare cases, school boards may see that, by acting entrepreneurially, they can set up their own cybercharters and win over students and revenue from other districts, thus using competition to make themselves better off; indeed, a small number of districts around the country (in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, for example) are already blazing this trail.

Technology is a double-barreled agent of change. It generates the innovations that make change attractive, and at the same time it undermines the political resistance that would normally prevent change from happening. There will be struggles and setbacks, and the process will take decades. But the forces of resistance will ultimately be overcome, and American education transformed. This will mean real improvement for the nation, its children, and its schools. It will also bring the dawning of a new era in which education politics is more open, productive changes are more readily embraced, and learning is liberated from the dead hand of the past. ■

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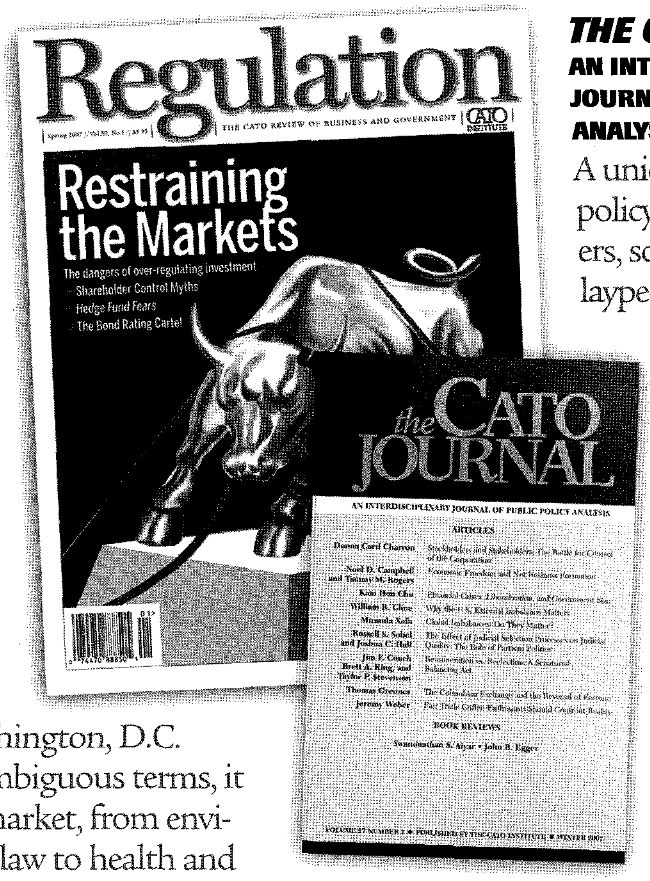
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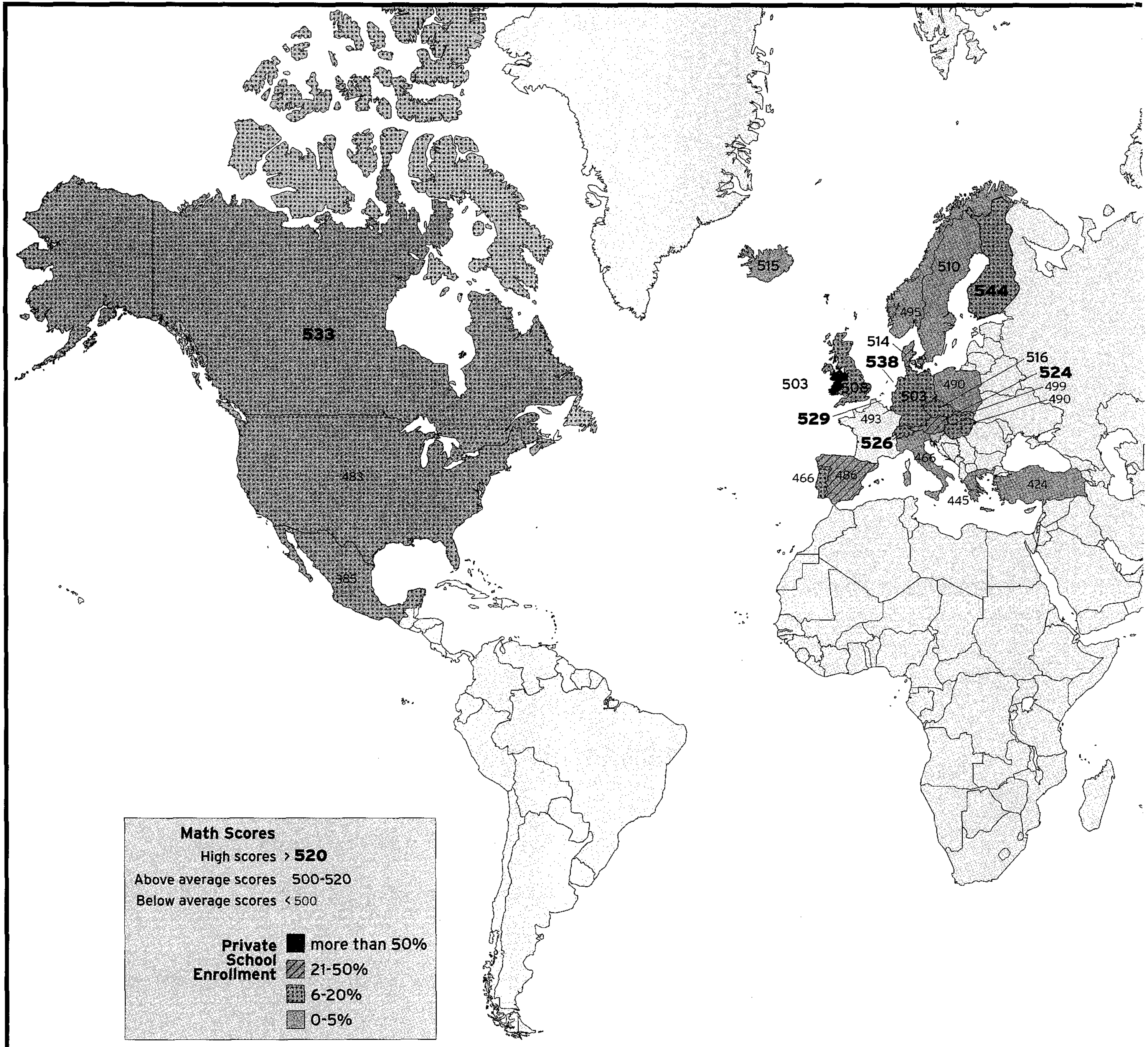
School Choice

Private School Enrollment and Math Achievement (Figure 1)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466
486
466
445
424
490
516
524
499
490
Math Scores
High scores › 520
Above average scores 500-520
Below average scores ‹ 500
Private School Enrollment
■ more than 50%
▨ 21-50%
▦ 6-20%
▩ 0-5%

SOURCE: Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2003

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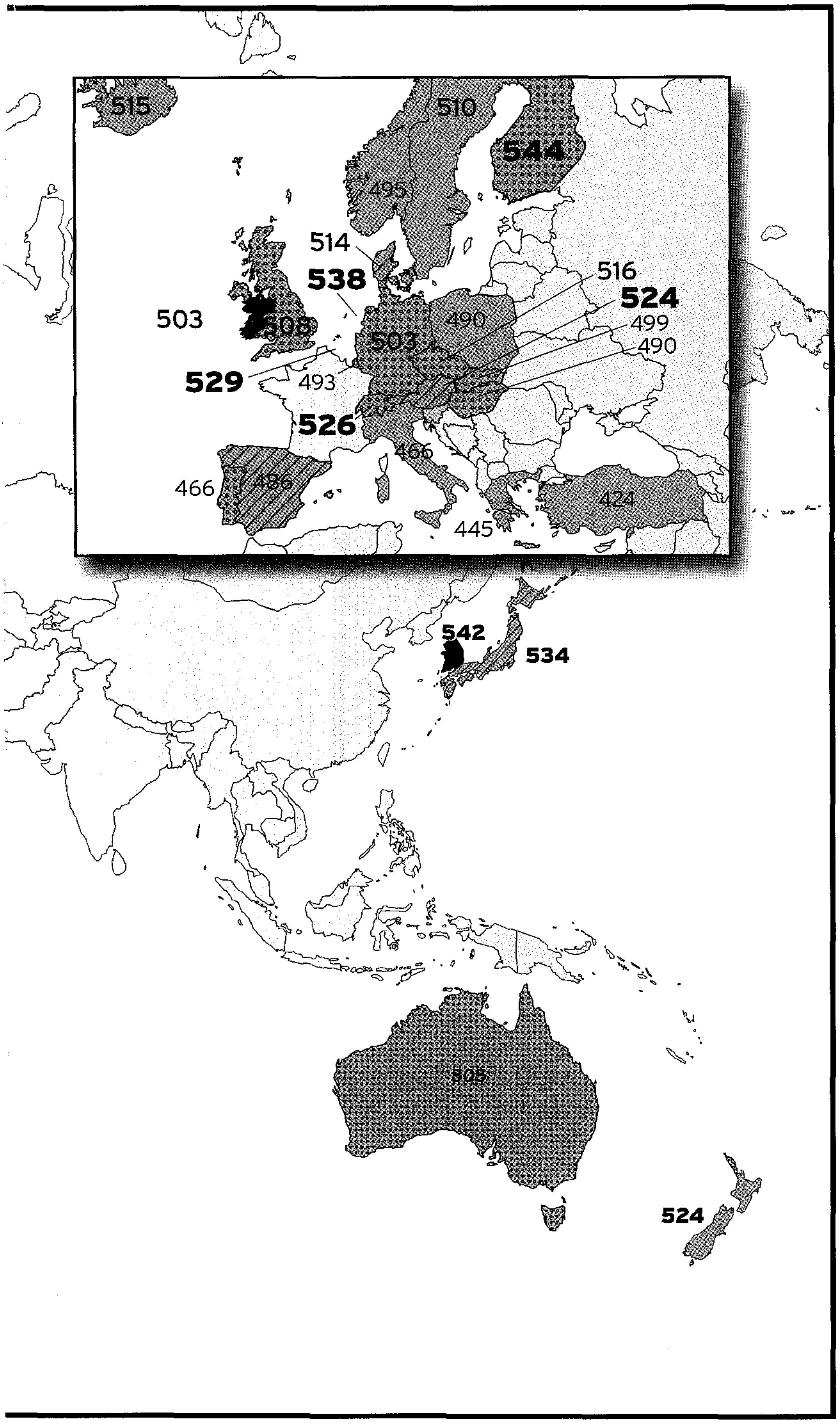
INTERNATIONAL



Higher private school share boosts test scores

Proponents of vouchers and other measures that expand access to private schooling often claim that competition from privately operated schools will spur student achievement—and, perhaps, lower costs—in public schools. Critics of such policies, in response, note that the educational benefits of competition are unproven and that student achievement in the public sector could decline as students become segregated along lines of ability, ethnicity, or class.

Scholars have attempted to discern the effects of competition between the public and private sectors within the United States and in other countries, but no study, to our knowledge, has attempted to measure systematically the causal impact of competition by looking at variation across countries. Until now, research has been stymied by the fact that any simplistic statistical correlations between the extent of competition and student achievement that might be found are suspect. Countries where more people choose to invest in private schools may have other attributes, such

MARTIN R. WEST and LUDGER WOESSMANN

as more income or a greater commitment to education, that lead to higher levels of achievement. If this is the case, any positive correlation between private schooling and student achievement could reflect a country's income or educational commitment rather than any beneficial effects of competition. Or it may be the case that low-quality public schools increase the demand for private schooling. If so, then it could appear that competition lowered the quality of public schooling when in fact the causal connection was in the opposite direction.

In this study, we solve this conundrum by taking advantage of the historical fact that the amount of competition in education today varies from one country to another for reasons that have little to do with contemporary school quality, or national income, or commitments to education. The extent of private schooling stems in large part from the Catholic Church's decision in the 19th century to build an alternative system of education wherever they were unable to control the state-run system.

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Nineteenth-century Catholic doctrine strongly opposed Catholic attendance at state-run schools that were not controlled by the Church. In the United States, for example, Catholics perceived government-operated "common schools" to be Protestant-dominated institutions that were only ostensibly nonsectarian. Local parishes responded by establishing separate schools in which children received Catholic-infused instruction. The United States was not the only country where this happened. Catholic school systems developed in many other countries, but their size depended on the percentage of Catholics living in that country during this critical period (see sidebar). (In countries where Catholicism was the state religion, there was no perceived need for private schools, however.) As a result, even today the size of the private education sector—and thus the amount of competition between public and private schools—is related to the size of the Catholic population in 1900.

To connect the historical past to competition's effect on achievement today requires two analytic steps. We first estimate the statistical relationship between the size of the Catholic population in 1900 and the extent of private schooling today in order to capture only that share of the private sector's size that can be attributed to 19th-century Catholic policies—policies we assume to be otherwise unrelated to contemporary student achievement. Having estimated this relationship between Catholicity in the past and competition in the present, we then use that estimate to isolate the causal effect of private school competition on the achievement of individual students across 29 countries.

Our results confirm that countries with larger shares of Catholics but without an official Catholic state religion in 1900 have significantly larger shares of privately operated schools in 2003. More important, private school competition attributable to past Catholic policies generates higher student achievement in mathematics, reading, and science today. We also show that competition between the public and private sector positively affects the achievement of students attending *public* schools. Spending on education is also reduced, suggesting that school systems are more productive if they are more competitive.

PISA 2003

For the information on contemporary student achievement we rely on the well-regarded data sets compiled by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment

Catholic Doctrine and Private Schooling

Over the course of the 19th century, Vatican authorities expressed increasing concern over the implications of emerging state-run education systems for the moral and religious training of Catholics. For example, among the propositions included in the *Syllabus Errorum (Syllabus of Errors)*, a list of commonly held beliefs condemned by Pope Pius IX in 1864, was the notion that "Catholics may approve of the system of educating youth unconnected with Catholic faith and the power of the Church." Pope Leo XIII, in his 1884 encyclical *Nobilissima Gallorum Gens (On the Religious Question in France)*, wrote that the Church "has always expressly condemned mixed or neutral schools; over and over again she has warned parents to be ever on their guard in this most essential point." The *Catholic Encyclopedia*, published during the pontificate of Pope Pius X in 1912 as a summary of official Catholic doctrine, stated that the "State monopoly of education has been considered by the Church to be nothing short of a tyrannical usurpation."

The Vatican's formal pronouncements concerning education constituted binding mandates for Catholic officials at the national level, and the late-19th-century historical record is accordingly filled with evidence of their efforts to construct and maintain independent school systems.

In 1884, the officials of the Catholic Church in the United States convened at the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore and, taking heed of the Vatican's pronouncements, affirmed the "absolute necessity and the obligation of pastors" to maintain distinctively Catholic schools. It ordered that every parish open such a school within two years and decreed that "parents must send their children to such schools unless the bishop should judge their reason for sending them elsewhere to be sufficient." Their goal, the council famously declared, was no less than to see "every Catholic child in a Catholic school." By 1911, there were almost 5,000 parochial schools serving more than 1.27 million students nationwide. Although American Catholic schools have never enrolled more than a small fraction of the national student population, as late as 1980 they accounted for almost 80 percent of enrollment in private elementary and secondary schools (see "Can Catholic Schools Be Saved?" *features*, Spring 2007).

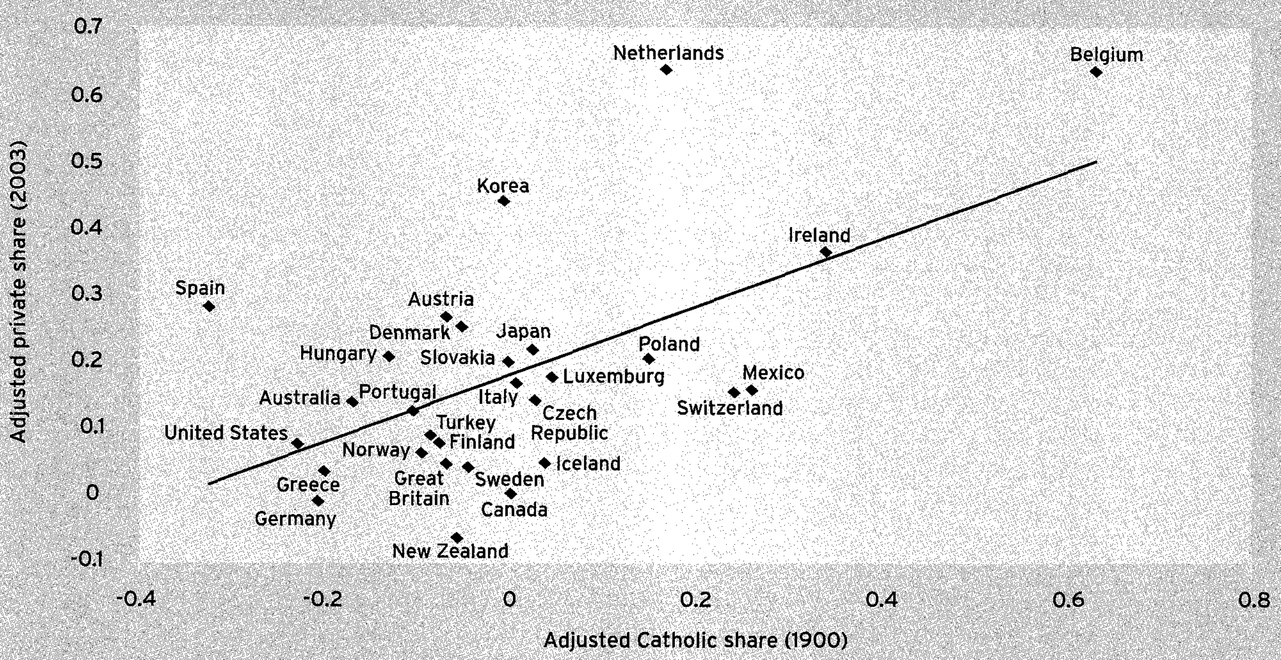
In predominantly Catholic Belgium, after the nation won its independence in 1830, the Church had either maintained its own schools with the support of public funds or exercised strong influence over the curriculum in municipal schools. But, in 1879, the elite-dominated Liberal party banned subsidies for Catholic schools and required all municipalities to establish public schools that would replace religious instruction with secular moral training. Belgian Catholics responded by removing their children from the public schools and erecting their own, parallel system. The share of Belgian elementary school students in Catholic schools rose from 13 percent in 1878 to 61 percent just two years later. In 1884, the Catholic party regained a legislative majority and immediately returned control of schooling to the municipalities, allowing them to adopt or subsidize Catholic private schools within their jurisdiction.

In the neighboring Netherlands, where Catholics made up about one-third of the population, they allied with Calvinists who were equally dissatisfied with the nondenominational instruction available in the state sector in order to secure government funding for privately operated religious schools. In 1878, the Liberal party had adopted new staffing and physical requirements for all schools and established subsidies for municipal schools only. Both changes threatened the continued existence of confessional schools and provoked an intense popular response. By 1888, the Catholics and Calvinists had acquired a majority in the Parliament and the following year they adopted the same 30 percent national subsidy for confessional schools. In 1917, the Dutch Constitution was amended to guarantee equal funding for any school meeting general enrollment and quality standards, without regard to whether the school was publicly or privately operated. The share of Dutch students attending privately operated schools accordingly increased from 25 percent in 1880, to 38 percent in 1910, to 73 percent in 1940.

It is important to note that Protestant Christians in most countries were less resistant to state control of mass education. There were clearly exceptions, such as the Calvinists in the Netherlands, who rejected the lowest-common-denominator Protestantism available in state schools and joined forces with the Catholics in advocating for public subsidies for their own schools. As a general rule, however, the less centralized Protestant denominations lacked formal doctrines mandating that schooling be under their exclusive control and were more willing to pursue their educational goals within the framework created by state-run systems.

The Legacy of Catholic Resistance (Figure 2)

Countries that had larger Catholic population shares in 1900 have more students enrolled in private schools today.



Note: The y-axis shows 2003 private school enrollment shares, adjusted for all of the control variables in our models except 1900 Catholic population shares. The x-axis shows 1900 Catholic population shares, also adjusted for the control variables, with countries with Catholic governments initially assigned a value of zero. The solid line plots the relationship between the two variables among the 29 countries in our sample.

SOURCE: Authors' calculations using Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2003, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, and other international statistical sources

(PISA) in 2003. Working closely with official government agencies, PISA gathered information on the mathematical, scientific, and reading literacy of nationally representative student populations in all 30 OECD countries. The term "literacy" signifies that the PISA measured not only the students' knowledge of math, reading, and science, but also their ability to use that knowledge to meet real-life challenges. In 2003, PISA made a special effort to measure math literacy, allocating 70 percent of testing time to questions in this subject. PISA assessed the achievement of 15-year-old students in each country, regardless of the grade they attended. This means that, in most participating countries, PISA tested students nearing the end of compulsory schooling.

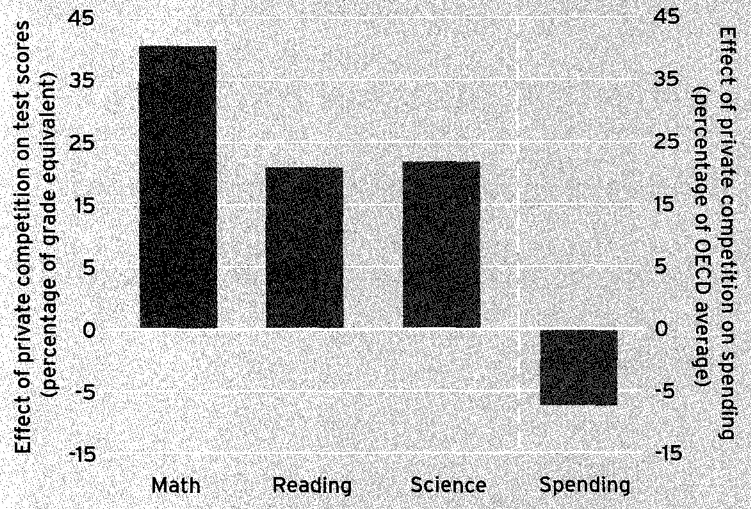
For purposes of this analysis, we constructed a data set that contained pupil-level test scores for about 220,000 students. We also were able to obtain from PISA student reports of their background characteristics and administrator reports on the characteristics of each student's school, including such things as school resources and whether the school was public or private. All that information was available from 29 of the 30 OECD countries. (France had to be dropped from the analysis because it did not supply any information on the characteristics of its participating schools.)

We defined a school as private if the principal reported that it was managed directly or indirectly by a nongovernment organization (e.g., a church, trade union, business, or other private entity). A public school was defined as one being managed directly or indirectly by a public education authority, government agency, or governing board appointed by government officials or elected by public franchise. We used these definitions to calculate the share of private schools in a country. Throughout our study, this figure serves as our measure of the extent of contemporary private school competition in each country.

The size of the private sector so defined ranges widely across countries. In the Netherlands, more than three-quarters of 15-year-old students attend privately operated schools. Private school shares in Belgium, Ireland, and Korea are also well above one-half. By contrast, the share of students attending privately operated schools in Greece, Iceland, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and Turkey is below 5 percent. Just over 6 percent of the American 15-year-olds sampled by PISA attended private schools, a figure

Doing More with Less (Figure 3)

An increase in private school enrollment shares of 10 percentage points boosts average national test scores in mathematics, science, and reading. It also lowers cumulative education spending through age 15 by 5.6 percent of the average across the OECD countries.



Note: The bars represent the causal effect of an increase in the private school enrollment share among 15-year-olds of 10 percentage points.

SOURCE: Authors' calculations using Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2003, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, and other international statistical sources

that corresponds closely to official estimates of private enrollment at the secondary level from the U.S. Department of Education (see Figure 1).

Estimating Competitive Effects

Recall that our analysis involves two steps. First, we estimate the amount of contemporary private school competition across our 29 countries that can be accounted for by the share of each country's population that was Catholic in 1900. Where Catholicism was the official state religion, we assign a value of zero for this variable (even though the size of the Catholic population was quite large). That decision is not as odd as it sounds, as we are interested in Catholicism only insofar as it was a factor contributing to the creation of a private sector, something that clearly was not the case in those countries where Catholicism was the state religion and Catholics had no reason to object to the education provided in state-run schools.

The second step uses the connection between past Catholicism and the contemporary size of the private sector to estimate the impact of competition on student achievement. Specifically, we measure the relationship between Catholic-induced private school competition in a country and the PISA test scores of individual students in math, reading, and science.

In taking this approach, we assume that the density of Catholics in 1900 is not directly related to student achievement today, independent of effects that may occur via school competition. While this assumption cannot be proven, there are good reasons to believe it is well founded. Protestant Christians have historically placed a greater emphasis than have Catholics on the value of education, because Protestants thought individual Bible reading helped one along the road to salvation. Catholics placed greater emphasis on remaining connected to the traditions and practices of the Church. Interestingly enough, in those 22 majority-Christian countries for which data on literacy in 1900 are available, one finds a strong negative association between Catholic population shares and literacy rates. This strong negative correlation exists even after accounting for the lower gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, which is associated with lower literacy rates, in countries with larger Catholic population shares. So to the extent that we find any beneficial effect of Catholic-induced private school competition, its size is probably depressed by cultural values related to Catholicism. In other words, our approach is more likely to yield underestimates than overestimates of competitive effects.

Of course, the historical prevalence of Catholicism could also have had other consequences, apart from a greater reliance on private schooling, that indirectly affect student achievement. For example, the share of Catholics in a country could have an effect on current GDP per capita or education spending per student. We therefore account for the effect of both of these factors in all of our analyses.

In estimating the effect of private school competition on student achievement, we also adjust for the effects of a host of other factors that can affect individual student performance. In addition to the country-level factors of per capita GDP and education spending per student, we include in our analysis information on the presence or absence of external exit exams (which research suggests are associated with higher achievement) and information on whether the country had a Communist government in 1970 (which may have affected both the size of the private sector and achievement). Student and family background characteristics used in the analysis include a student's gender, immigration status, exposure to early childhood education, the number of books in the home, and parental occupation and work status. Finally, we account for school resources such as class size, availability of materials, teacher certification and preparation, and amount of time for instruction.

Our findings from an international study of 29 countries speak quite clearly. Competition from private schools improves student achievement, and appears to do so for public school as well as private school students. And it produces these benefits while decreasing the total resources devoted to education.

Private School Competition and Student Achievement

The first step of our analysis confirmed the existence of a statistically strong relationship between the extent of private school competition in 2003 and a country's Catholic population in 1900, much as the historical record would suggest. A 10-point increase in the percentage of Catholics in 1900 is associated with a 4.7-percentage-point increase in the share of students enrolled in privately operated schools in 2003 (see Figure 2). These results support our basic reasoning that as long as Catholics could not be sure that the emerging public school systems of the 19th century would provide education in line with their church's demands, they tended to resist state schooling and establish their own private schools alongside the state sector. The consequences of historical differences in denominational shares across countries persist to this very day.

The results from the second step of our analysis are equally striking. Let us begin with the results related to student achievement in mathematics, the subject most extensively assessed in PISA 2003. A 10-percentage-point increase in the share of national student enrollment in private schools attributable to a historically larger share of Catholics induces an improvement in PISA math scores of 9.1 percent of a standard deviation (see Figure 3). As a benchmark for interpreting the magnitude of this effect, note that the difference in average mathematics test scores between the two grades with the largest share of 15-year-olds (9th grade and 10th grade) in the PISA study was 22.1 percent of a standard deviation. This "grade-level equivalent" provides a rough idea of how much a typical student learns during one school year. By this metric, our estimate of the effect of a 10-percentage-point increase in private school enrollment is equivalent to 41 percent of a year's worth of learning in high school.

Because we are able to draw on evidence from a relatively small sample of only 29 countries, the statistical precision of our estimate is not very high. That is, we can say with 95 percent confidence that the effect of a 10-percentage-point increase in the private school share is between 3.9 and 14.2 percent of a standard deviation in test scores. Still, this means we have a very high degree of confidence that the real effect is larger than zero. The bottom line is that students in countries whose larger shares of Catholic population in 1900 induced them to have larger shares of privately operated schools today performed significantly better on the PISA 2003 math test.

As an additional step to address any lingering concerns about Catholicism's direct influence on student achievement, we conducted both stages of our analysis again, this time accounting for the relationship between contemporary differences in the share of Catholic adherents in a country and student achievement. We found that historical Catholic shares continue to be a strong predictor of the extent of private school competition in a country. In addition, the estimated effect of Catholic-induced private school shares on student achievement increases relative to our first version of the analysis, which did not account for contemporary Catholic adherence. There is now a 12.2 percent of a standard deviation increase in test scores for each 10-percentage-point increase in the private school share in a country. This larger estimate suggests that the true effect may be closer to the upper bound of the interval we identified above.

Why the stronger relationship between private school competition and student achievement? We reason that this may be because, in the latter approach, the Catholic-induced school share was reflecting the slightly negative direct effect of contemporary Catholic adherence on student achievement, a relationship that reveals itself in this version of the analysis, although the estimated effect is just shy of statistical significance. Considered together, these results increase our confidence that we are describing a real, causal relationship between private competition and student performance, rather than effects of cultural differences related to religious adherence.

The estimated effects of the private school share on student achievement are somewhat smaller in science and reading than in math, but they remain substantial, positive, and statistically significant (see Figure 2). A change in the historical Catholic population share that produces a 10-percentage-point increase in the extent of contemporary private school competition generates an improvement of about 5.5 percent of a standard deviation in both science and reading—or more than one-fifth of a grade-level equivalent in these subjects.

To gain additional insights, we also re-ran both stages of our analysis while accounting for the average share of funding that private schools receive from the government. The inclusion of this variable hardly affects our results, suggesting that our findings reflect competitive effects stemming from the private operation of schools and not from differences in funding policies.

Effect on Public School Students

The previous portions of our study investigated the impact of private competition on student achievement in the educational system as a whole. But what about the effect of private school competition on public schools? To answer this question, we removed all students attending a privately operated school from the sample in each country and analyzed only the academic achievement of students in the public sector.

These results are somewhat more difficult to interpret than our findings above, as they combine the effects from competition with the consequences of student sorting. In other words, some of what we find may be due to high-ability students (and their parents) being more likely to choose private schools, leaving the weaker students in the public sector.

Nonetheless, the results suggest that public school students profit nearly as much from increased private school competition as do a nation's students as a whole. While our estimates of the effects are somewhat smaller than the estimates for students in both the private and public sectors, the results are not statistically distinguishable. It therefore appears that much of the increased performance of education systems with higher levels of private school competition accrues to students who attend public schools.

Education Spending

The analysis so far has been limited to educational outcomes, estimating the effect of private school competition on students' achievement. In doing so, we have controlled for possible effects of differences in educational inputs such as class sizes, availability of materials, and aggregate expenditure per student in the country. We wondered, though, whether private school competition also affects the input side of the educational process, specifically educational spending per student.

We again used a two-stage process, with the first stage using historical Catholicism to predict the Catholic-induced share of current private school competition in each country. Then, in a second stage, we measured the relationship across countries between the Catholic-induced share of competition and the cumulative educational expenditure per student up to age 15—a measure that includes both public and private spending. We continued to account for a range of country- and student-level characteristics when making these comparisons, but we now excluded measures of school resources that are likely to be affected by spending levels.

Our results show that private school competition, in addition to raising student achievement, substantially reduced the average spending level of the educational system. Changes in historical shares of Catholics in the population that are associated with a 10-percentage-point increase in the private school share today lead to a $3,209 reduction in cumulative spending per student, or 5.6 percent of the average OECD spending level of $56,947 (see Figure 3).

Conclusion

Our findings from an international study of 29 countries speak quite clearly. Competition from private schools improves student achievement, and appears to do so for public school as well as private school students. And it produces these benefits while decreasing the total resources devoted to education, as measured by cumulative educational spending per pupil. Under competitive pressures from private schools, the productivity of the school system measured as the ratio between output and input increases by even more than is suggested by looking at educational outcomes alone. Ironically, although Catholics historically placed less emphasis on education than did adherents of many other religions, their resistance to state-run schooling in many countries helped create institutional configurations that continue to spur student achievement.

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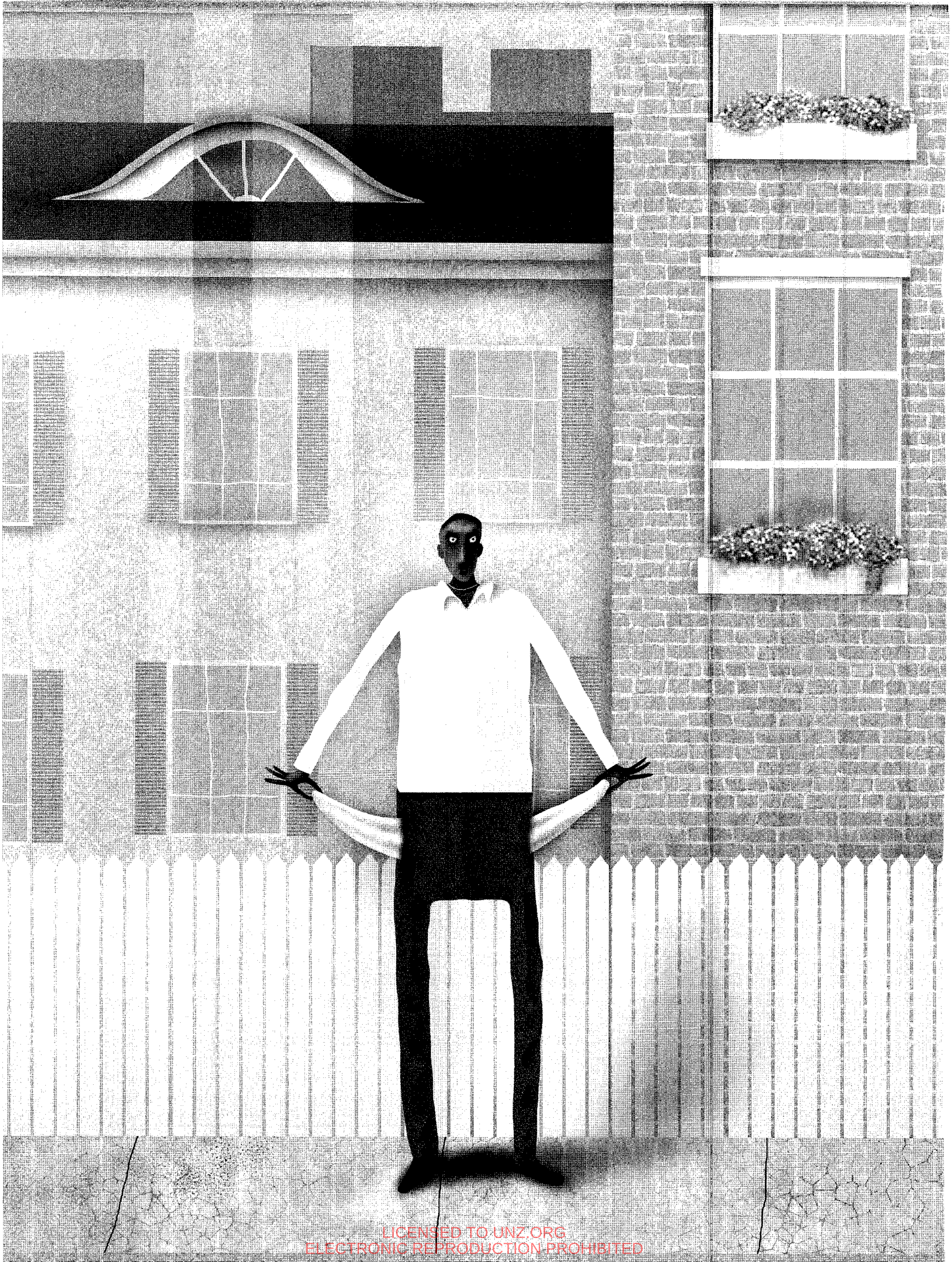


who Gains, who Loses?

The fiscal impact of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program

Do school vouchers save the taxpayer money, or do they add to taxpayer burdens? Which groups of taxpayers are most affected, and do they gain or lose? What is the financial impact on public school districts? Usually, these questions are debated in the abstract. Now it is possible to get more concrete answers from the nation's longest-running school voucher initiative, the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) in Wisconsin.

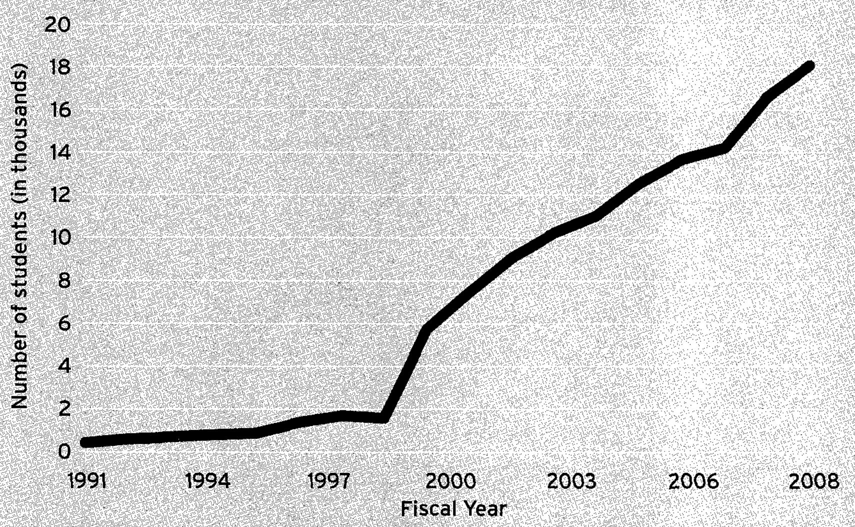
The fiscal impact of that program has been a matter of dispute. According to school choice supporters, such as Marquette University professor and former Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) superintendent Howard Fuller, MPCP saves the taxpayers considerable cash, as the voucher is smaller than per-pupil spending by MPS. But Wisconsin state senator Russ Decker, a leading opponent of vouchers, has argued that the program gives money to children who would attend private schools anyway and declared, "You've got a lot of additional money going into the choice program that we could better use funding public education statewide." Wisconsin's Legislative Fiscal Bureau, which conducts budget-related analyses for state legislators, has provided fodder to both sides of the Milwaukee voucher debate with periodic estimates of the financial impact of eliminating the program based on a wide range of assumptions regarding changes in public school enrollments.

BY ROBERT M. COSTRELL

ILLUSTRATION / DAVID CUTLER

Growing Strong (Figure 1)

Enrollment in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) grew slowly until 1999, when the state allowed religious schools to participate and raised the cap on enrollments.



Note: Enrollments are calculated as the average of September and January FTE for a given year, plus summer school.

SOURCES: "MPCP Membership and Payment History in Total" and "MPCP Facts & Figures," Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

The dollar amounts in question have become significant, as the voucher program continues to grow. MPCP started in fiscal year 1991 as a small initiative, capped at 1 percent of MPS enrollment, with a few hundred students from low-income families who chose to attend secular private schools. (In the remainder of this paper, "fiscal year" shall be generally understood.) Starting in 1999, the state expanded the program to religious schools and lifted the cap to 15 percent of MPS enrollment (about 15,000 students). In 2007 the cap was raised to 22,500. With these changes in the legal framework, enrollments have grown steadily to about 18,500 students in 2008 (see Figure 1).

The way in which the legislature funds the program has also changed in important ways over the years. Fiscal impacts have varied over time as a result of those decisions. At the same time, features that were adopted when the program was small outlived their rationale as the program grew, and the vestiges that persisted have caused notable distortions.

What has been the net fiscal impact of MPCP? Who has benefited and who has taken a hit as the program has grown? How has MPCP affected taxpayers statewide? Milwaukee taxpayers? In this analysis, I show that under most plausible scenarios the program has saved taxpayers money annually since 2000, with estimated savings reaching $31.9 million in 2008. The beneficiaries have been Wisconsin state taxpayers and property taxpayers outside of Milwaukee. Property taxpayers in Milwaukee, however, have seen their taxes go up, the result of legislative decisions on the MPCP funding formula made in the program's earliest days.

Designing a Voucher Program

It is important to recognize that any fiscal impact of MPCP on school districts and taxpayers is not inherent in the concept of a voucher, but the result of specific characteristics of the situation in Wisconsin. As a benchmark case, consider a hypothetical voucher program that has no net impact on taxpayers or on per-pupil district revenues. First, suppose all voucher students would otherwise have gone to a public school. Second, suppose the amount of the voucher is identical to the revenues per pupil at the district school. The diversion of voucher funds from the district to the voucher school would leave per-pupil revenues unchanged and would also have no net impact on taxpayers. The money simply follows the child in the same way that state monies follow children when they move from one school district to another that has equal per-pupil revenues.

In one important respect, today's MPCP matches the hypothetical program. Although this was not initially the case, since 2000 the formulas that determine state and local revenues for MPS have not counted voucher students. Because the revenues MPS is allowed to spend are calculated on a per-pupil basis, the loss of a voucher student leaves MPS per-pupil revenues unaffected, as is the case when a student leaves for another district.

The impact on the public purse is a different matter. The amount of the voucher is less than the per-pupil revenues allocated to MPS, which implies a savings for taxpayers, just as voucher supporters claim.

Offsetting such savings, however, are the voucher expenses for those eligible students who, in the absence of the program, would still have attended a private school. Those families would have saved the taxpayer money by paying their own education bill, but as they are eligible for a voucher, they can attend the private school at public expense instead. The taxpayer bears the cost that the low-income family would otherwise have borne. One might well argue that this is a worthy use of taxpayer funds, but in the narrow context of determining the program's fiscal effects, it counts as a negative impact.

The net impact on taxpayers, then, is 1) the savings that come from the difference between the voucher and the per-pupil revenue at district schools, for those who would have attended them in the absence of the voucher program, *minus* 2) the voucher costs for students who would have attended private schools anyway. Let's consider the latter factor first.

Estimating Private School Use

According to a federal survey, about 5 percent of low-income families send their children to private school, less than half the 12 percent rate for all families. That figure may underestimate what we are looking for, which is the percentage of low-income voucher users who would have attended private schools without them. One can derive a better estimate from recent research conducted on other urban voucher programs that serve low-income families. Those studies have collected information on private school usage by voucher-seeking families, both those who were awarded vouchers (by lottery) and those who were not. Only a few thousand such students have been studied, so estimates are not from as large a sample as one would like, and the cities in these studies may differ from Milwaukee in some respects, but the data provide as direct an estimate as can be obtained. A midrange estimate derived from this literature is that about 10 percent of voucher-using students from low-income families in big cities would have attended private schools anyway (the percentage is higher for one-year attendance and lower for more sustained attendance).

This 10 percent estimate can be checked for consistency with trends in private school enrollment before the voucher program began in Milwaukee. I have examined long-term trends for private school enrollment using two data sets. University of Wisconsin professor John Witte reports on Milwaukee private school enrollments from 1960 to 1997, while the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) provides enrollment figures for Milwaukee's private schools from 1993 to 2008.

These data show a drop of more than 25,000 in private school enrollment from the mid-1960s to the beginning of MPCP (interrupted by a temporary rise from 1977 to 1984). The Catholic schools were particularly hard hit, having served an ethnic population that was migrating to the suburbs throughout these decades.

I have spliced the two data sets together for the period since MPCP began and examined the trends that would have obtained without the program, under varying assumptions about the percentage of voucher students that would have attended private schools anyway. I find that under the 10 percent estimate drawn from the lottery literature, the resulting private enrollments are consistent with prior trends. When it is assumed that 30 percent of voucher-using families would have chosen private schools, the resulting enrollments imply a noticeable slowdown of the long-term downward trends, a result that seems possible, but not at all compelling. If the rate were assumed to be 50 percent or more, long-term downward trends would have been reversed, which does not seem credible.

About 10 percent of voucher-using students from low-income families in big cities would have attended private schools anyway.

To summarize, data from voucher experiments in other cities indicate that about 10 percent of low-income voucher users would have attended private school anyway. This estimate is consistent with long-term downward trends in Milwaukee private enrollments, while rates of 30 percent or higher are not consistent with those trends. I provide estimates below of the fiscal impact of MPCP under assumptions ranging up to 30 percent, but 10 percent is probably closer to the correct figure.

Measuring the Gap

The other factor needed to calculate MPCP's net fiscal impact is the gap between the voucher and MPS per-pupil revenues. The specific concept I use for MPS is the "revenue limit," set by Wisconsin statute, which places a maximum on each district's combined revenues from local property taxes and state formula aid. Although districts are not required to raise local levies up to the amount allowed by the revenue limit, in practice, that is what happens: statewide, approximately 99.8 percent of revenue limit capacity is used and, in most recent years, Milwaukee has used 100 percent. The revenue limit does not cover federal revenues, but this can be ignored when estimating the impact of MPCP on state and local taxpayers. Nor does it include categorical state aid, primarily for special education and low-income students, which constitutes about 6 percent of revenues from state aid and property taxes in Wisconsin, and 9 percent in Milwaukee. This means my analysis will underestimate the savings from voucher students, since some of them would draw on categorical state aid were they in MPS.

Figure 2 depicts the per-pupil revenue limit for MPS, which rose from $5,804 in 1994 (the year Wisconsin established revenue limits) to $9,141 in 2008. The graph also depicts the increase in the maximum MPCP voucher, from $2,446 in 1991 to $6,501 in both 2007 and 2008. (The average voucher is slightly less than the maximum. Since average voucher data are only available with a lag, I use the maximum voucher in this analysis, which slightly underestimates the savings from MPCP.) The gap between the MPS revenue limit and the MPCP maximum voucher size was generally around $2,000 from 1997 to 2003, but drifted up to $2,332 in 2007 and $2,640 in 2008.

Net Fiscal Impact

MPCP's impact on taxpayers can be readily calculated from the gap between the voucher and per-pupil MPS revenues, under any given assumption regarding the percentage of voucher users who would have otherwise attended private school. Table 1 presents these calculations for 2008, with each row representing a different assumption, from 0 to 30 percent. My preferred estimate, as explained above, is 10 percent, indicated by the bold figures, and the other rows show how the results vary depending on the assumption one makes about private school usage in the absence of vouchers.

The calculations are based on 18,500 enrollees in MPCP, a voucher amount of $6,501, and MPS revenue limit per pupil of $9,141. Consider the results under the 10 percent assumption, shown in the second row. Column 1 shows the savings on voucher users who would have attended MPS. At the 10 percent rate, there are 16,650 such students (0.90 × 18,500), each of whom saves $2,640 in public funds ($9,141 – $6,501), for a total of $44 million. Column 2 shows the expenditure on voucher users who would have attended private schools anyway. At the 10 percent rate, 1,850 such students each receives $6,501, for a total of $12 million. Column 3 shows the net savings, the difference between columns 1 and 2, which is $31.9 million.

The Bottom Line (Table 1)

Net Impact of MPCP on Public Funds, FY08 ($ millions)

Assumed percentage of MPCP students who would have attended private school even if no voucher program	Savings on voucher users who would have attended MPS (1)	Expenditure on voucher users who would have attended private school (2)	Net savings (3) = (1) - (2)
0	$48.8	$0.0	$48.8
10	**$44.0**	**$12.0**	**$31.9**
20	$39.1	$24.1	$15.0
30	$34.2	$36.1	($1.9)

Note: The calculations are based on 18,500 MPCP enrollees, a voucher amount of $6,501, and Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) revenue per pupil of $9,141.

SOURCE: Author's calculations

As the other rows show, the result is somewhat sensitive to the assumed percentage, but for most of the relevant range the net savings amount is positive. It does not turn negative unless one assumes close to 30 percent of MPCP's low-income voucher users would have attended private schools, an assumption that seems unrealistically high.

Figure 3 depicts the net fiscal benefit from MPCP from 1994 to 2008, assuming that 10 percent of voucher users would have attended private schools. The net benefit was only about $2 million per year prior to the program's expansion in 1999. Since then, as MPCP enrollments have grown and as the gap has widened between the voucher and MPS revenues per pupil, the benefit has grown from $7.3 million to $31.9 million in 2008. The remainder of my analysis addresses the questions of *which* taxpayers benefited, how the distribution of benefits has evolved over the life of the program, and why.

Wisconsin School-Funding Formulas

To understand the distribution of MPCP's fiscal impact, one needs first to learn about Wisconsin's regular school-funding formulas. There are two interlocked formulas: revenue limits and equalization aid. The revenue limit formula, underlying Figure 2, takes each district's per-pupil revenues from the prior year and tacks on a legislatively determined annual increment. The total revenue each district is allowed to raise from property taxes and general state aid is simply that per-pupil amount, multiplied by enrollment (smoothed by three-year averaging).

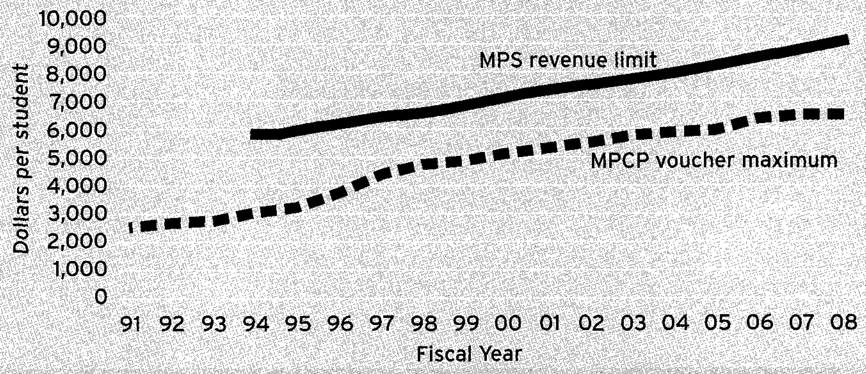
The equalization aid formula determines the split of each district's total revenue between state aid and local property taxes, with differences across districts based primarily on per-pupil property values. Taken as a whole, Wisconsin state aid has generally comprised two-thirds of the school revenues statewide, leaving one-third to be raised from property taxes, an arrangement that was once codified in state law and more recently persists by political custom.

Together, the two formulas determine the distribution of any cost savings that result from enrollment shifts. Suppose, for example, a number of students leave Milwaukee for a lower-spending rural district. Total revenues fall for MPS and rise for the rural district, but by a lesser amount, for a net saving of public funds. Two-thirds of the savings accrue to state taxpayers. The other third accrues to local property taxpayers across the state. This property tax relief is distributed across the state in approximate proportion to local property values. Specifically, Milwaukee property taxpayers would receive about 6 percent of the statewide property tax relief, since that is Milwaukee's approximate share of statewide property values.

In principle, the funding for the voucher program could be integrated into the regular funding system. There is, after all, no inherent fiscal difference between students leaving MPS with lower-cost vouchers and students leaving for lower-cost districts. As public funds are freed up by voucher-using students, the net savings could be distributed among state taxpayers and property taxpayers across the state through these formulas. As we shall see, however, a rather different funding mechanism was adopted for MPCP.

Vouchers Cost Less (Figure 2)

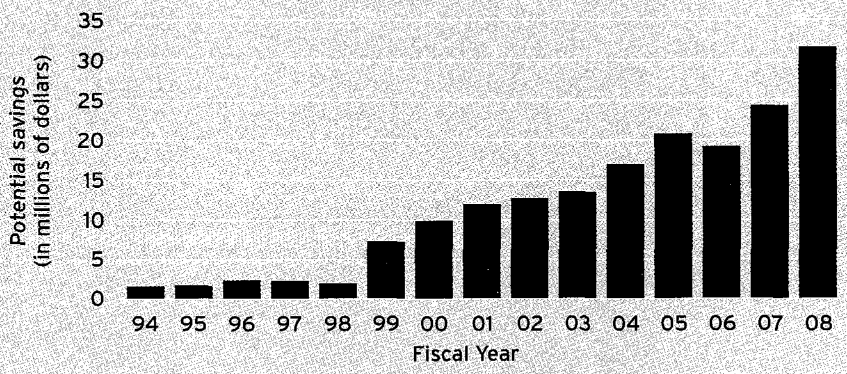
The maximum voucher has always been less than what the school district is allowed to generate per student, with an average difference of more than $2,000 since the initial revenue limit was imposed.



SOURCES: "MPCP Membership and Payment History in Total," "Multi-Year Revenue Limit Survey," and private communication, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Taxpayer Savings from Voucher Program (Figure 3)

Comparing the cost per student of the MPCP voucher and in MPS shows that the voucher program had the potential to save Wisconsin taxpayers almost $32 million in 2008 and a total of $180 million since 1994.



Note: These values assume 10 percent of MPCP students would have enrolled in private schools without the offer of a voucher.
SOURCE: Author's calculations

Before 2000

In the earliest days of MPCP, when the program was very small, the funding formula had three key features. First, voucher students were counted as part of MPS enrollments for the purposes of calculating revenue limits and equalization aid. Second, the voucher expenses were deducted from MPS's equalization aid. Finally, Milwaukee was given the option of raising its property taxes beyond that allowed by the ordinary revenue limit, to make up for the voucher expenses deducted from its state aid.

This was not an unreasonable system, for both economic and political reasons, in the earliest days of the program. For one thing, it effectively insulated the state budget and property taxes outside of Milwaukee from the program. In addition, the nature of the impact was left up to Milwaukee: it could choose to let the voucher money follow the child, accepting a net reduction in total (but not per-pupil) MPS revenues. Or, it could choose to maintain total MPS revenues, by paying for the vouchers out of higher property taxes.

Milwaukee chose the latter option, for reasons that are perhaps understandable. It might be argued, for example, that the decline in MPS enrollment was too small to affect certain indivisible costs, such as the number of teachers or buildings that comprise the lion's share of the district's budget. In this view, it would be justified to maintain total revenues, despite

The entire net benefits of the voucher program accrue to state taxpayers and property taxpayers outside of Milwaukee.

falling enrollments, for a higher revenue per pupil. In any case, the initial magnitudes were not huge: the impact on Milwaukee property taxes was no more than $2.5 million by 1995 and $7 million by 1998. This impact is depicted in Figure 4 by the dark bars in the negative region. The dotted bars in the positive region for this period represent the impact on MPS of the rise in per-pupil revenues.

With the program's expansion to religious schools in 1999—MPCP enrollment nearly quadrupled that year—the impact on Milwaukee property taxes jumped to $28.3 million, as shown in Figure 4. The fixed-cost rationale for maintaining MPS total revenues became more tenuous, as MPCP enrollments approached 6,000, larger than 95 percent of all school districts in Wisconsin. But MPS chose to maintain total revenues, collecting $39.5 million more than would have been needed to maintain the per-pupil amount. The program had clearly outgrown its initial fiscal formula.

Reform Incomplete

Starting in 2000, voucher students were no longer included in the calculation of MPS revenue limits or equalization aid. This was a major reform. As a result, MPS was no longer able to maintain total revenues as it lost MPCP students, but could still maintain per-pupil revenues. Consequently, the dotted bars in Figure 4 disappear starting in 2000. The savings from MPCP were now fully available for taxpayer relief.

But the reforms were not complete. Logically, as the revenue limit of MPS fell with the departure of MPCP students, money that was freed up in the state's general fund could have directly funded the vouchers. Funding would have followed the child, much as it does between school districts under the regular funding formulas.

Instead, the funding formula continued to deduct voucher expenses from MPS equalization aid, although the deduction was cut in half. Specifically, starting in 2000, half the voucher deduction was moved from the equalization aid of MPS to the other districts of the state. Later, the draw on other districts' aid was eliminated, replaced by a direct draw on the general fund, and the aid deduction for MPS was reduced from 50 to 45 percent of voucher expenses. The key point here is that MPS still loses state aid to cover almost half the voucher expenses, even though MPS no longer receives any aid for MPCP students. This means MPS stands to lose revenues on a *per-pupil* basis.

To avoid this result, Milwaukee is still allowed to offset the MPCP deduction by raising property taxes—and it has chosen to do so. The resulting impact on Milwaukee property taxes can be seen in the dark bars in Figure 4. Starting in 2000, the impact is approximately halved from what the previous system implied, but the rationale for any adverse impact is gone. These higher property taxes no longer pay for the option of maintaining total revenues as enrollments decline; instead, they are necessary to maintain *per-pupil* revenues.

This means the entire net benefits of the MPCP program (and more) now accrue to state taxpayers and property taxpayers outside of Milwaukee, as depicted in the striped and light bars in Figure 4.

Fiscal Impact 2008

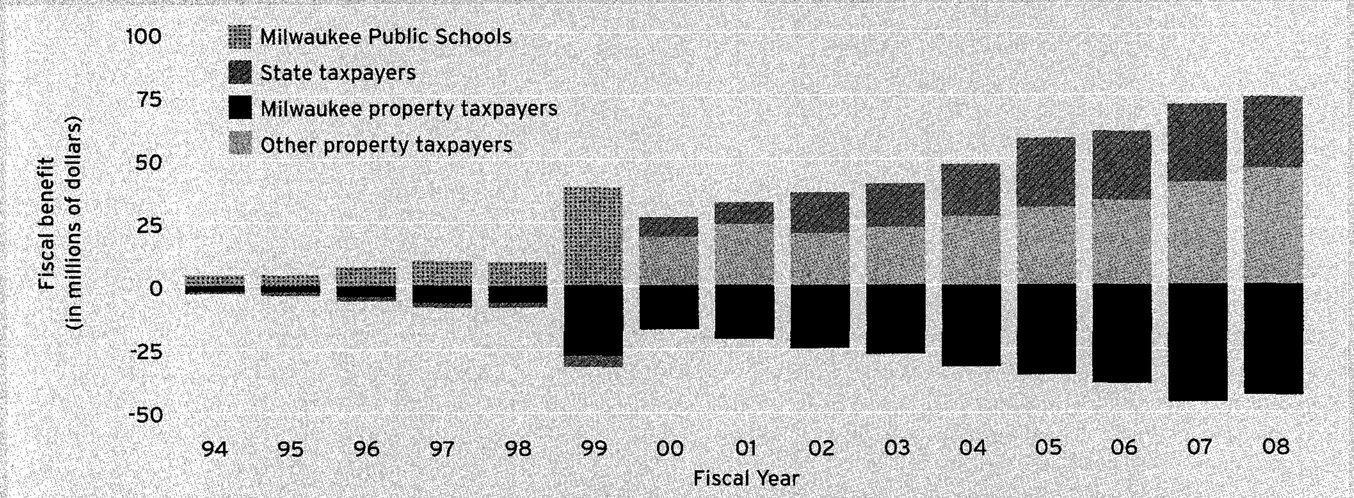
To understand the mechanics reflected in Figure 4, consider the data for 2008. Milwaukee property taxes were raised to defray voucher expenses totaling $54.1 million (0.45 × $6,501 for each of 18,500 MPCP students). This was slightly offset by Milwaukee's $3.1 million share of statewide property tax relief (discussed below), but still reached $51 million. Faced with the growing impact, the governor and the city of Milwaukee pressed for reform. The legislature responded with an ad hoc measure, "high poverty aid," to reduce school property taxes, primarily in Milwaukee. This amounted to $7.4 million in 2008, so the adverse impact on Milwaukee property taxpayers was reduced from $51 million to $43.6 million.

Meanwhile, the rest of the state continued to benefit from MPCP. Because the 18,500 voucher users do not count in MPS revenue limits, $9,141 each was saved for the 90 percent of voucher students we assume would have attended MPS, a total of $152.2 million. Of that, one-third, or $50.7 million, went to statewide property tax relief. Milwaukee's share was approximately $3.1 million (proportional to their share of statewide property values), leaving $47.6 million as the net benefit to property taxpayers outside of Milwaukee, depicted by the light bar in Figure 4.

The state's general fund gained the other two-thirds of the $152.2 million saved from MPS revenue limits, or $101.5 million. However, the general fund paid 55 percent of the voucher expenses, totaling $66.1 million (0.55 × $6,501 for each of 18,500 MPCP students). In addition, for 2008, the ad hoc

Milwaukee Property Taxpayers Hit Hardest (Figure 4)

Those who pay the Milwaukee property tax have borne the brunt of the cost for the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, while other taxpayers in Wisconsin have seen tax savings from the program.



Note: These values assume that 10 percent of MPCP students would have enrolled in private schools without the offer of a voucher and that the state share of public education expenditures is two-thirds.

SOURCE: Author's calculations

property tax relief for Milwaukee cost $7.4 million. So the net benefit to state taxpayers was $101.5 million *minus* $66.1 million *minus* $7.4 million, which equals $27.9 million, depicted by the striped bar in Figure 4.

Drawing these all together, we have $27.9 million (state benefit) *plus* $47.6 million (non-Milwaukee property tax relief) *minus* $43.6 million (adverse impact on Milwaukee), which equals a $31.9 million net impact. This is the figure shown in Table 1. This net savings of $31.9 million from MPCP accrued entirely to the state's taxpayers and property taxpayers outside of Milwaukee, along with an additional windfall of $43.6 million, effectively paid by the property taxpayers of Milwaukee.

Conclusion

The history of the MPCP illustrates how voucher programs can provide significant taxpayer savings when students voluntarily choose to attend schools that draw less on public funds than the schools they would otherwise attend. However, the same history also illustrates that if the funding formulas are not carefully constructed—and reformed as growth requires—some groups of taxpayers may be adversely affected.

The initial funding mechanism was designed for a small program, so the district was allowed to maintain total expenditures as enrollments dipped, through modest increases in property taxes. As the program grew, the mechanism was modified to enable the district to maintain per-pupil revenues, rather than total revenues. However, vestiges of the original funding mechanism meant that Milwaukee property taxes had to go up just to maintain per-pupil revenues. The underlying reason is that instead of funding the vouchers out of the savings to the state's general fund, 45 percent of voucher expenditures are still deducted from Milwaukee's state aid, even though their aid has not included funds for voucher students since 2000.

So who gains? State taxpayers and property taxpayers outside of Milwaukee. Who loses? Milwaukee property taxpayers. And why? We have seen the mechanics of how this occurred, but ultimately, this is a political question. The policymakers of Milwaukee and Wisconsin have known for some time about MPCP's "funding flaw" (as it is called). It remains to be seen whether, as the program grows, this flaw will undermine it or instead lead legislators to complete the reforms that would integrate MPCP with the regular funding formulas so the benefits can be shared by all.

Robert M. Costrell is professor of education reform and economics at the University of Arkansas. The report from which this paper is drawn is part of the comprehensive evaluation of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program being conducted by the School Choice Demonstration Project at the University of Arkansas.

What Happens When States Have Genuine Alternative Certification?

We get more minority teachers and test scores rise

By Paul E. Peterson and Daniel Nadler

Forty-seven states have adopted a pathway to teaching, alternative to the standard state certification otherwise required. Is this new pathway genuine or merely symbolic? Does it open the classroom door to teachers of minority background? Does it help—or hinder—learning in the classroom? Claims about all of these questions have arisen in public discourse. Recently, data have become available that allow us to check their validity.

To receive a standard state certification in most states, prospective teachers not only must be college graduates but also must have taken a specific set of education-related courses that comprise approximately 30 credit hours of coursework. Prospective teachers are well advised to pursue studies at a college or university within the state where they expect to teach, because it is often only within that state that students can get the courses required for state certification in the subject area and for the grade levels that they will be teaching.

Such certification requirements limit the supply of certified teachers, and as a result, serious teaching shortages are regularly observed. For example, in California, one-third of the entire teacher work force, about 100,000 teachers, will retire over the next decade and need to be replaced, compounding what the governor's office calls a "severe" current teacher shortage. Other states are facing a similar situation. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics projects a shortfall of 280,000 qualified math and science teachers by 2015. As former National Education Association president Reg Weaver put it, "At the start of every school year, we read in the newspaper...stories about schools scrambling to hire teachers."

Teachers of minority background are in especially short supply. In 2004, only 14.1 percent of the nation's teachers were African American or Hispanic, even though these ethnic groups comprised 26.5 percent of the adult population. That shortage has led to calls for remedial action. In the words of Weaver, "An impressive body of research confirms that recruiting and retaining more minority teachers can be crucial to" raising the achievement of minority students. "States and school districts need to develop programs...[that] reach out to minorities still in school, offering encouragement and incentives to enter the teaching profession. We need more minority teachers. School districts need to aggressively recruit them."

The Certification Debate

Both colleges of education and teachers unions oppose any relaxation of certification requirements. In Weaver's view, "The solution is not to develop alternative routes of entry into the profession or to increase the supply of recruits by allowing prospective teachers to skip 'burdensome' education courses or student teaching. The solution is to show a little R-E-S-P-E-C-T, and show us the money."

According to this point of view, certification is necessary to ensure teacher quality, because teaching, like other professions (law, medicine, the sciences, and so forth), requires mastery of an esoteric body of substantive and pedagogical knowledge that cannot be obtained without undergoing a rigorous training program. Arthur Wise, former head of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, told the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, "Rigorous teacher preparation is key to ensuring that no child is left behind.... Content knowledge is only one indicator of readiness to teach.... [Schools of education] must prepare new teachers to teach the great diversity of students who are in America's classrooms today."

But Kate Walsh, president of the National Council on Teacher Quality, says that the "certification process" has only a "crude capacity for ensuring" quality teachers, because pedagogical "knowledge can be acquired by means other than coursework." Teachers learn to teach by practicing the craft, not by taking coursework in its history or psychology. If that is so, then both the teaching shortage and the paucity of minority teachers can be alleviated by opening the classroom door to all college graduates, not just to those who have taken the required courses associated with state certification.

Although no state has abandoned its traditional certification programs in response to calls for broader recruitment

Opening the School Door to Minority Teachers (Table 1)

States with a genuinely alternative route to teaching (shaded below) tend to have a teaching force that is more representative of the state's ethnic composition.

State	Teachers % Minority	Population over 21 % Minority	Index of Representation
Louisiana	27.4	35.8	0.8
Alabama	21.2	28.6	0.7
Florida	24.8	34.2	0.7
Maryland	23.9	34.7	0.7
Mississippi	26.7	38.6	0.7
New Mexico	29.7	44.4	0.7
Tennessee	13.6	19.8	0.7
Texas	31.3	45.8	0.7
California	22.8	40.5	0.6
Georgia	20.2	36.3	0.6
Michigan	11.1	18.4	0.6
Montana	1.6	2.7	0.6
North Carolina	16.7	27.9	0.6
Pennsylvania	8	14.4	0.6
South Carolina	17.9	32.6	0.6
Virginia	16.1	25.8	0.6
West Virginia	2.6	4.3	0.6
Arkansas	10	20.3	0.5
Delaware	11.8	26.4	0.5
New Jersey	13	28.5	0.5
Ohio	7.5	14.6	0.5
Wisconsin	4.7	10.4	0.5
Arizona	13.4	30.9	0.4
Colorado	8	22.8	0.4
Hawaii	3.7	8.7	0.4
Indiana	5.5	13.4	0.4
Maine	0.7	1.9	0.4
Massachusetts	6	13.9	0.4
Missouri	6.3	14.4	0.4
New York	11.8	31.5	0.4
Oregon	4.3	11.4	0.4
Alaska	2.4	8.7	0.3
Connecticut	6.1	20.3	0.3
Illinois	9.6	29	0.3
Kentucky	3.2	9.7	0.3
Nevada	8.9	30	0.3
Oklahoma	4.2	14.3	0.3
Vermont	0.5	1.8	0.3
Wyoming	2.2	7.5	0.3
Idaho	1.6	9.3	0.2
Iowa	1.1	6.1	0.2
Kansas	3.1	14.2	0.2
Minnesota	1.6	8.1	0.2
Nebraska	2	11.3	0.2
New Hampshire	0.8	3.2	0.2
North Dakota	0.4	2.4	0.2
Rhode Island	2.6	15.7	0.2
South Dakota	0.6	2.8	0.2
Washington	2.7	12.3	0.2
Utah	1.5	11.4	0.1

Note: Minority is defined as African American or Hispanic. The index of representation is the ratio of the percentage of teachers of minority background to the percentage of the state's adult population of minority background.

SOURCES: Office for Civil Rights; Department of Education; Census Bureau

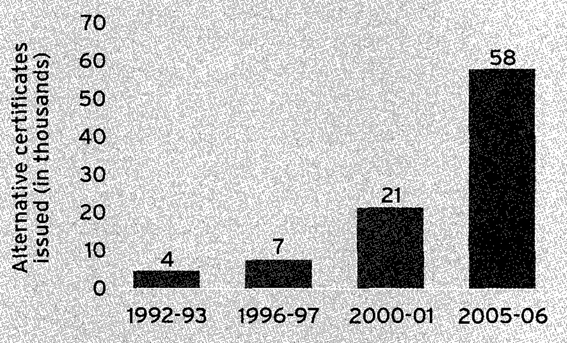
As a general rule, states require 30 Methodology credits (15 per year) in education for a student to become a certified teacher. The exact courses to be taken vary depending on specialty. For our study, if the alternative certification program in a state also required 30 credits, or was within a credit or two of that figure, we considered the state's alternative certification program to be only symbolic. When we could not determine the number of credits by examining official publications, either online or at the library of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, we posed the following question to the relevant state official: "I have a college degree and would like to pursue a nontraditional route into the teaching profession. Is there some option where I can take a test and then teach? Or, if not, is there an option where the requirements are substantially less than 30 credits, which I can apply for based on my degree?" If the answer was no, then we identified the alternative certification program as only symbolic and not genuine, despite claims made in official publications. If the answer was yes, then we identified the program as a genuine alternative certification option. Of the 21 states we consider to have had genuine alternative certification, 7 required only that the person pass a test, while 14 required coursework but substantially less than 30 credits.

Table 1 indicates states with genuine (shaded) and those with symbolic or no alternative certification. Data are unavailable for the District of Columbia. South Carolina and New York, here classified as symbolic alternative certification states, recently expanded and increased the quality of their alternative certification routes, but are properly classified as symbolic for the period under discussion.

In a separate study, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute identified 12 states with alternative certification. We include 11 of the 12 in our list of states with genuine certification. As mentioned, New York is classified as having only symbolic certification, as that was the situation at the time these data were collected.

Growth Industry (Figure 1)

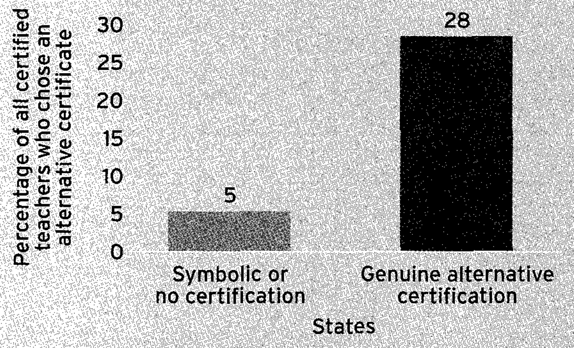
The number of alternative teaching certificates issued in the United States increased from little more than 20,000 in 2001 to nearly 60,000 in 2006.



SOURCE: National Center for Alternative Certification

Symbolic vs. Genuine Alternative (Figure 2)

In states where alternative certification was genuine, more than one-quarter of teachers chose this path in 2004–05; in the other states, only 5 percent did.



SOURCE: National Center for Alternative Certification

paths into education, all but three states have set up some kind of alternative certification pathway, and the number of alternatively certified teachers has steadily grown. In 2001, just 20,000 alternative teaching certificates were issued. By 2006, nearly 60,000 alternatively certified teachers were entering the teaching force each year, roughly one-fifth of new entrants (see Figure 1).

In many states, however, the alternative certification requirements closely resemble traditional ones. As Chester Finn, president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute (and *Education Next* senior editor), explains, "Typical alternative certification programs have come to mimic standard-issue pre-service college of education programs.... Alternative certification has been co-opted, compromised, and diluted. Education schools—brilliantly turning a threat into an opportunity—have themselves come to dominate this enterprise, blurring the distinctions that once made it 'alternative.'"

Symbolic vs. Genuine Alternatives

To see which states have established genuine alternative certification programs and which have only symbolic ones of the kind described by Finn, we compared alternative certification rules to requirements for traditional certification in each state. We obtained information from state web sites as well as from publications available for prospective teachers at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. When necessary, we contacted relevant officials in state departments of education (see sidebar on page 71).

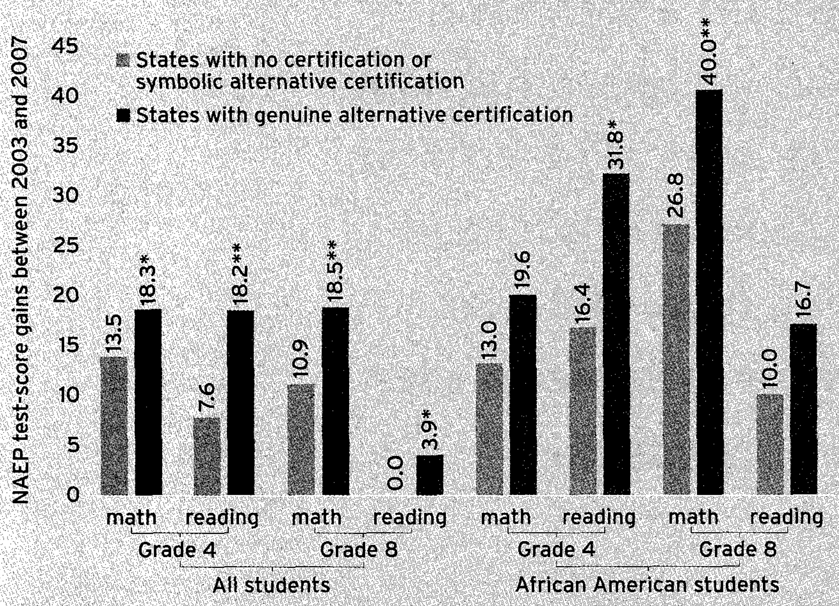
There is every reason to believe that alternative certification is key to recruiting more minorities into the teaching profession.

Our research revealed that the design of alternative certification programs varies considerably from one state to the next. In 26 of the 47 states that allow alternative certification, the situation is as Finn describes, similar to standard-issue education school programs. But in the other 21 states, alternative teacher certification can be obtained without completion of most of the coursework associated with traditional certification (though the states may require additional coursework after a teacher secures a classroom position).

The variation in state practice allows us to provide some preliminary answers to questions frequently raised about alternative certification: Do states that provide a genuine alternative, not simply a symbolic one, recruit more teachers who take the alternative certification route? Do they open the classroom door to more

Effective Alternatives (Figure 3)

The test scores of 4th- and 8th-grade students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress increased more in those states that provided a genuinely alternative route to certification. African American students also made larger gains, though the difference was not statistically significant in 8th-grade reading.



*Difference statistically significant at the 0.1 level.

**Difference statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Note: The bars depict estimated test-score gains in the two groups of states, given no change in the other variables in the model. The model adjusts for changes in state ethnicity, percentage of students in the free and reduced-price lunch program, per-pupil expenditures, and pupil-teacher ratios.

SOURCE: National Assessment of Educational Progress. Information for African American students available for 40 or 41 states, depending on grade level.

minority teachers? What is the impact on student learning?

The answer to the first question is very clear: it makes a good deal of difference whether alternative certification is meaningful or symbolic. In the 30 states that do not have genuine alternative certification, only 5 percent of the newly certified teachers chose the alternative route in 2004–05 (the most recent year for which information is available). Hardly anyone bothers with an alternative certificate if the requirements are essentially the same as for the traditional one. In the 21 states that offer genuine alternative certification, however, 28 percent of newly certified teachers utilize the option (see Figure 2). Altogether, 92 percent of those with an alternative teaching certificate received it in one of the 21 states that have such certification in reality as well as in name.

Minority Representation

To the second question, there is also a fairly clear answer: minorities are represented in the teaching force to a greater extent in states with genuine alternative certification than in other states. Information on the number of minority teachers in each state is available from the Office for Civil Rights and the U.S. Department of Education. Together with census data, that information allows for the calculation of the ratio of minority teachers to minority adults for each state, which serves as an index of minority representation. If the index for a given state has a value of 1.0, then the percentage of minority teachers equals the percentage of minority adults in that state. If the index exceeds 1.0, then minorities are overrepresented in the teaching population; if the index is below 1.0, minorities are underrepresented.

In 2004 (the most recent year for which data are available) minority teachers were seriously underrepresented in the nation's public school classrooms. The nationwide ratio in 2004 was 0.53, which means that only a little more than half as many minority adults were teachers as one would expect, given the minority composition of the adult population.

The index of minority representation was nonetheless considerably higher in the 21 states with genuine alternative certification than in the 30 states with a symbolic substitute or no alternative certification (see Table 1). In the states with genuine alternative certification, the weighted average index of representation was 0.6, while in the states with a symbolic substitute or no alternative certification, the index was 0.2. In the three genuine alternative certification states with the largest total populations (California, Texas, and Florida), the index of representation was 0.56, 0.68, and 0.72, respectively, while in the three largest states with a merely symbolic or no alternative certification option (New York, Illinois, and Ohio), the index of representation was 0.38, 0.33, and 0.51, respectively. In other words, genuine alternative certification seems to give minority adults interested in a career in education greater opportunity to become a teacher.

Of course, minority teachers may be recruited by avenues other than alternative certification. Sixteen states report the ethnic background of alternatively certified teachers to the U.S. Department of Education. In 14 of them, the percentage minority for those alternatively certified exceeds by a wide margin the percentage minority of the state's teaching force as a whole. In Mississippi, for example, the disparities are massive: 60 percent of the more than 800 teachers who were alternatively certified in 2004–05 were of minority background, while the overall Mississippi teaching force is just 26 percent minority. Other states where percentage differences between the two groups exceed at least 10 percentage points include California, Delaware, and Texas. In other words, there is every reason to believe that alternative certification is key to recruiting more minorities into the teaching profession.

Impact on Student Learning

But is alternative certification, however desirable a device for recruiting minorities into the teaching profession, impairing student learning? That is ultimately the justification for traditional teacher certification, regardless of its consequences for teacher shortages or for the recruitment of minority teachers. And that apparently is the rationale for those who interpret the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act as requiring a certified teacher in every classroom, the basis for the complaint in the California case *Renee v. Spellings*. That suit objects to the presence in classrooms of teachers who have not received traditional certification.

Most studies show very little, if any, connection with a teacher's classroom effectiveness and certification status. Harvard economist Thomas Kane and his colleagues (see "Photo Finish," *research*, Winter 2007) found no difference between the amount of learning taking place in New York City classrooms under the direction of non-certified teachers and in those under the direction of regularly certified ones.

Genuine alternative certification opens the door to more minority teachers, and student learning is more rapid in states where the reform has been introduced.

Nor is there convincing evidence that minority teachers are less effective at teaching minority students. On the contrary, the results from an experiment conducted in Tennessee (see "The Race Connection," *research*, Spring 2004) indicate that minority students learn more from teachers of their own ethnicity than from other teachers.

Our results are consistent with that research and other studies that have found little reason to equate certification with "highly qualified." Students attending schools in states with genuine alternative certification gained more on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) between 2003 and 2007 than did students in the other states. The finding holds, even when one adjusts for changes in the ethnic composition, free-lunch eligibility, class size, and education expenditures for each state (see Figure 3).

In states that had genuine alternative certification, test-score gains on the NAEP exceeded those in the other states by 4.8 points and 7.6 points in 4th- and 8th-grade math, respectively. In reading, the additional gains in the states with genuine alternative certification were 10.6 points and 3.9 points for the two grade levels, respectively. Among African Americans, test-score gains were also larger in the states with genuine alternative certification.

It is possible that the disproportionately large gains in test-score performance in the states with genuine alternative certification were due to some other factor, possibly other education reforms those states were introducing at the same time they were widening the door to the teaching profession. We cannot dismiss this possibility, inasmuch as we were able to control only for changes in certain demographic and policy variables, not for changes in other state policies that might explain the difference in test-score gains among states.

But the burden of proof would now seem to shift to the plaintiffs in the *Renee v. Spellings* case, who argue that traditional state certification is necessary to ensure teacher quality. Genuine alternative certification opens the door to more minority teachers, and student learning is more rapid in states where the reform has been introduced. Meanwhile, scientific evidence that alternative certification harms students remains somewhere between scant and nonexistent.

Paul E. Peterson, director of the Harvard Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG), is editor-in-chief of Education Next. *Daniel Nadler is a PEPG research associate.*

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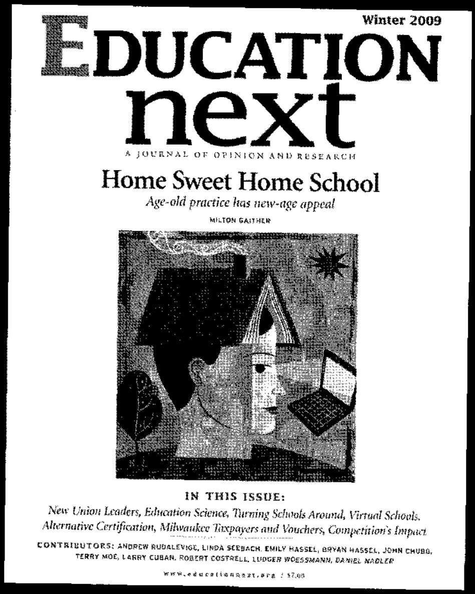

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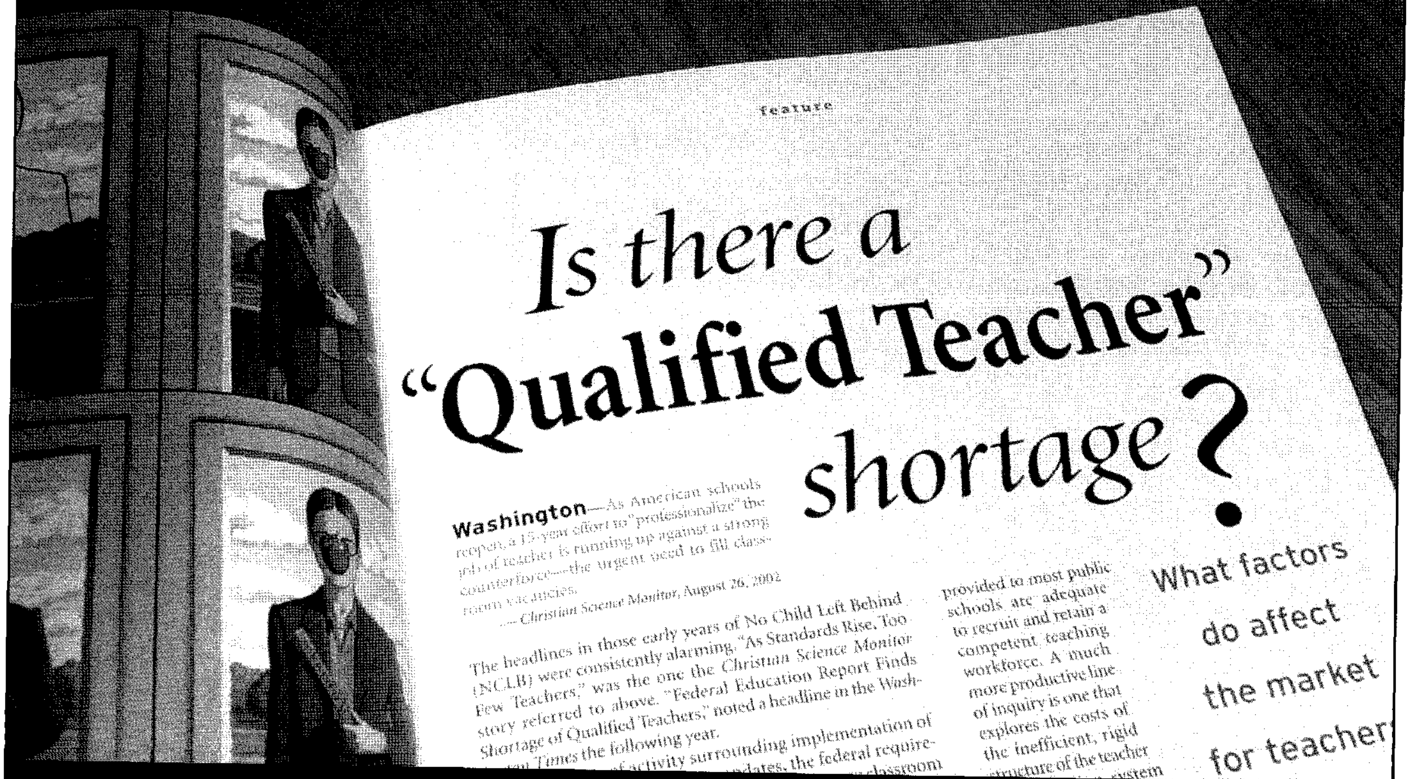

feature

Is there a "Qualified Teacher" shortage?

Washington—As American schools reopen, a 15-year effort to "professionalize" the job of teacher is running up against a strong counterforce—the urgent need to fill classroom vacancies.

—*Christian Science Monitor*, August 26, 2002

The headlines in those early years of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) were consistently alarming. "As Standards Rise, Too Few Teachers," was the one the *Christian Science Monitor* story referred to above. "Federal Education Report Finds Shortage of Qualified Teachers," noted a headline in the *Washington Times* the following year.

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Purposeful Youth

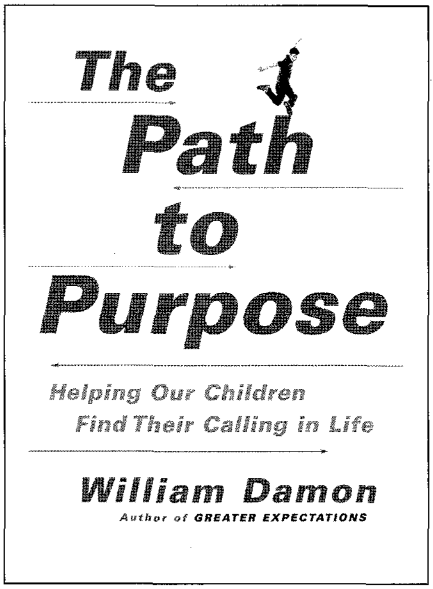
Is it asking too much?

The Path to Purpose: Helping Our Children Find Their Calling in Life

By William Damon

Free Press, 2008, $25.00; 217 pages.

As reviewed by Nathan Glazer


The Path to Purpose
Helping Our Children Find Their Calling in Life
William Damon
Author of GREATER EXPECTATIONS

Many American young people do not have meaningful or significant purpose to guide them, and do not get much help from their teachers.

William Damon, a distinguished psychologist and the director of the Stanford Center on Adolescence, has long been interested, along with Howard Gardner and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, in the study of those who succeed, who do "good work" (the title of one of his books, coauthored with Gardner and Csikszentmihalyi), who care (*Some Do Care*, the title of another), and who manage to live fulfilled lives. The "purposeful" among us seem not to include much of today's youth.

His latest book explores Damon's concern that many American young people do not have meaningful or significant purpose to guide them, and do not get much help from their teachers. As he defines it, "Purpose is a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at the same time meaningful to the self and consequential for the world beyond the self." Getting good grades and into college does not in itself fulfill the demands of purposefulness; even the desire to achieve these ambitions so as to make a good living and raise a family, while better, does not fully qualify.

Since 2003 Damon, along with collaborators, has been engaged in a study of 1,200 American youths between the ages of 12 and 26. He subdivides the young people in his study into four categories: the disengaged, the dreamers, the dabblers, and the purposeful. He considers one-fifth of the subjects to be purposeful; 25 percent he sees as disengaged, "showing no signs of anything remotely purposeful"; another quarter he labels dreamers, who have aspirations but have taken no steps to realize them; and another 31 percent are dabblers, "who have actively tried out a number of potentially purposeful pursuits, but without a clear sense of why they are doing so or whether they will sustain these interests into the future."

Damon also provides readers with a description of some of the purposeful youth in the study. Consider Ryan Hreljac, who at age 12 "had been working six years [sic] to raise money for drinking wells in parts of rural Africa...With help from his family, Ryan started a foundation, established a Web site..., and raised over $2 million.... Ryan has won numerous awards, including the World of Children Founder's Award, considered the equivalent of a Nobel Peace Prize for youth service."

Nina Vasan, 19, in her second year at Harvard, "has played sports competitively, hosted her own radio show, received the $50,000 grand prize at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, presented her research during the Nobel Prize festivities, was named one of the ten top Girl Scouts in the nation, ran the Olympic torch, and was a pageant winner as West Virginia's Junior Miss. On top of all this, and more significantly, Nina founded and served as national President of American Cancer Society Teens...." And so on.

Clearly these are heroes, or superheroes, of purposefulness. Still, Damon is on to something when he detects a drift and flaccidness in much of American youth. He refers to the research of UCLA professor Alexander Astin on the values of college freshmen, which show a strong shift since the late sixties, away from "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" and toward "being very well off financially."

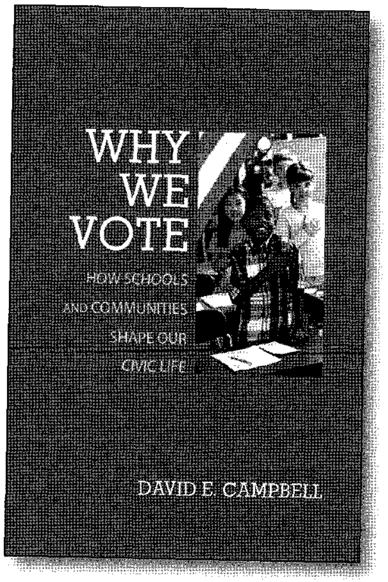
Damon is astute in noting how little our schools encourage purposefulness. Teachers may open up for students a variety of areas of potential study and engagement, but without offering any significant guidance as to how to choose, what to choose, and to what larger end. He might have gone further in showing the dangers to teachers of giving such guidance today. Urging greater civic engagement and purposefulness in the public realm might in many communities be looked upon with suspicion. If the teacher chooses the traditional means of instilling purpose—teaching religion—other difficulties arise to inhibit him. The presidents of our early liberal arts colleges generally gave their students a summing-up course, whose very purpose was to instill purposefulness. What college president would do this today? He would rather call in a non-faculty celebrity to deliver some inspiring words at commencement.

What advice does Damon offer? He is cautious in his prescription for teachers, bolder in making suggestions for parents. His subheads might well be considered maxims: "Listen closely for the spark, then fan the flames"; "Take advantage of regular opportunities to open a dialogue"; "Introduce children to potential mentors"; "Convey your own sense of purpose and the meaning you derive from your work." Well, that is a hard one. How many of us as parents have a "sense of purpose" and derive "meaning…from our work"?

Here Damon might well be faulted for taking for granted the model of professional life and assuming universal adoption of the values that classically are intertwined with the major professions, which in their ideal form do provide "purpose." Only a minority of Americans are in occupations that give them at least a way of speaking about purpose in their lives. For most Americans, getting a job of some kind to support a family seems a sufficiently demanding purpose.

The notion of trying to discover what one is good at or for, and shaping a career to realize these potentialities, would appear very upper middle class to many Americans, even today, when most aspire to college. If they get there, most aim at careers that do not embrace the values typically identified with the classic professions. Damon is aware of the problem. He refers to the research that shows how many doing modest work gain satisfaction from their jobs and feel what they do is important. True enough, but when Damon asks that purpose include not only the intention to accomplish something that is "meaningful to the self" but that is also "consequential for the world beyond the self," I believe he is making the path to purpose too difficult. We cannot expect even the first objective to be easily attainable for most people. Still, it is to the good that he has focused attention on the importance of an organizing objective for one's studies and one's life.

Nathan Glazer is professor emeritus of education and sociology at Harvard University.



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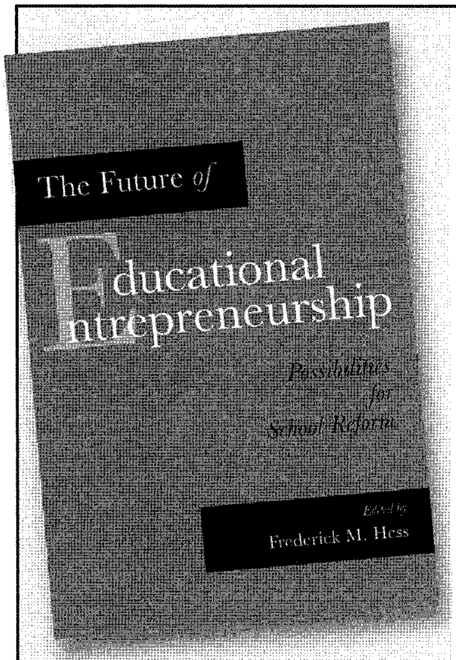

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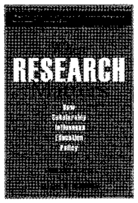

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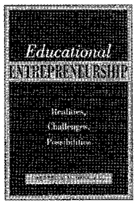

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book review

Reality Check

Murray's simple truths not so simple

Real Education: Four Simple Truths for Bringing America's Schools Back to Reality

By Charles Murray

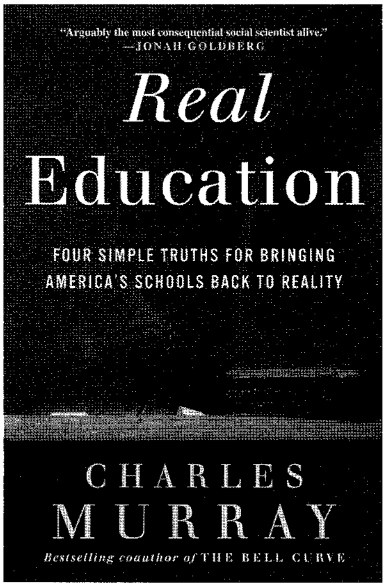
Crown Forum, 2008, $24.95; 224 pages.

As reviewed by Peter Wehner

Charles Murray is one of the most influential public intellectuals of the last quarter century. His 1984 book *Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950–1980* helped bring about a sea change in how we view welfare programs and paved the way for the 1996 welfare reform legislation, perhaps the most successful social policy reform in modern times. Murray's newest book, *Real Education*, in his words, "calls for a transformation of American education—a transformation not just of means, but of ends." We need, Murray argues, "to redefine educational success."

Real Education consists of five crisply written chapters. The first, "Ability Varies," borrows from Howard Gardner's classification of multiple intelligences. Murray identifies three—spatial, linguistic, and logical-mathematical—that he says constitute "academic ability." Having stated a simple and uncontroversial truth—ability varies and it varies a lot—Murray argues that this has transmuted into an untruth: "that everyone is good at something, and that educators can use that something to make up for other deficits." Murray goes on: "The core abilities that dominate academic success vary together," he argues. "Schools that ignore those realities are doing a disservice to all their students."

In chapter two, "Half of the Children Are Below Average," Murray argues, in intentionally jarring language, that schools have "no choice but to leave many children behind." (Murray clarifies his statement, saying that even the best schools will inevitably have students who do not perform at grade level.) Children in roughly the bottom third of the distribution of linguistic and logical-mathematical ability are "just not smart enough to succeed on a conventional academic track."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CHARLES
MURRAY
Bestselling coauthor of THE BELL CURVE

Murray bases his empirical claims on what he calls "three reality tests": The Coleman Report, published in 1966, assessed the effects of inequality of educational opportunity on student achievement. The expectation was that the report would document a relationship between the quality of schools and academic achievement. But, Murray says, "to everyone's shock, the Coleman Report...found that the quality of schools explains almost nothing about differences in academic achievement.... Family background was far and away the most important factor in determining student achievement."

Because he believes that poor children are disproportionately below average in academic ability, Murray's second test is Title I, a popular federal program whose goal is to upgrade the schools attended by children from low-income families. Evaluations of Title I have, according to Murray, shown no significant positive impact on student achievement.

The third test is No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the education reform law passed in 2002 whose goals include improving the performance of students in the lower half of the academic ability distribution. Murray argues NCLB will continue to fail in its effort to bring all the nation's children to "proficiency," however that is defined. All past efforts to raise the academic achievement of low-ability students, according to Murray, have failed, and so has NCLB.

Murray's third chapter, "Too Many People Are Going to College," argues that colleges are becoming obsolete, in part because of the Internet; that the provision of a liberal education should be done by elementary and secondary schools; and that "by making a college degree something that everyone is supposed to want, we are punishing the majority of young people who do not get one." According to Murray, bachelor's degrees have wrongly become a "symbol of first-class citizenship" and "[t]oday's college system is implicated in the emergence of class-riven America."

In chapter four, "America's Future Depends on How We Educate the Academically Gifted," Murray anticipates likely criticisms: "The proposition is not that America's future *should* depend on an elite that is educated to run the country, but that, whether we like it or not, America's future *does* depend on an elite that runs the country" [emphasis in the original]. He admits the idea is "instinctively unattractive." Given where we are, however, we need to train our elite to be better citizens. Murray spends most of the chapter dilating on what that means: rigor in verbal expression, forming judgments, thinking about virtue and the good, and developing empathy and greater humility.

Murray concludes with sound prescriptions for improving education, including obtaining a first-rate assessment of every child entering elementary school, providing a safe and orderly classroom, teaching a core curriculum, allowing gifted students to go as fast as they can, doing a better job at teaching those who are workbound after high school how to make a living, expanding school choice, and using certifications (similar to CPA exams) to undermine the BA.

Real Education is provocative and powerfully argued and, like Murray himself, intellectually impressive and fair-minded. Murray is right in saying that students have varying abilities and when educators don't take those differences into account, children suffer. He's right in insisting that we're not paying enough attention to academically high-achieving students. And he's right that the goal to make all American students "proficient" in reading and math is simply unachievable, if the notion of proficiency is to retain any useful meaning.

Where Murray is wrong, in my estimation, is in his scorn for No Child Left Behind. David Brooks of the *New York Times* has pointed out that NCLB "has ushered in a data revolution, and hard data is the prerequisite for change." And Chester Finn and Michael Petrilli of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute report that "NCLB and state-level efforts to impose standards and accountability on the schools are plainly boosting the kids who need it most—surely a good thing." A new, 50-state report by the Center on Education Policy found that reading and math scores are rising and achievement gaps are narrowing, gains that are attributable in part to NCLB.

But where I dissent most from Murray is in his assuming that students of low academic ability are achieving pretty much all they are capable of and that better schools, better teachers, and the right policies would make at best only a marginal difference when it comes to improving their achievement in reading and math. His conclusions run counter to what I have witnessed over the years. When I worked for then Secretary of Education William Bennett, he made a point of traveling to successful schools throughout America to highlight what works. In city after city, we saw outstanding schools and educators like East L.A.'s Jaime Escalante significantly improve the academic achievement of what were thought to be low-ability students.

It's not obvious to me that American students are so much farther down the intelligence scale than their agemates in other lands.

Nor does Murray sufficiently explain documented success stories like the KIPP schools, a national network of free, open-enrollment charter schools serving more than 14,000 students, mostly low income and initially poorly performing. KIPP schools couple high expectations with a longer school day and no-nonsense instruction. The results are impressive: the average student who has been with KIPP for four years starts 5th grade at the 40th percentile in mathematics and the 32nd percentile in reading; after four years, these same students are performing at the 82nd percentile in mathematics and the 60th percentile in reading.

There are examples all across America of schools and educators who are similarly making impressive academic strides with students of more-limited academic abilities. These successes demonstrate that while there are certainly boundaries to what some can achieve academically, we can do much better. There remains an enormous gap between what all of our students are currently learning and what they are capable of learning. And playing off a line from Finn, it's not obvious to me that American students are so much farther down the intelligence scale than their agemates in other lands.

To his credit, Murray is wholly uninterested in tinkering at the margins of policy debates. His goal is far more ambitious: to challenge key assumptions and fundamentally alter how we think about things. *Real Education* does that, and those who care about education and children should take Murray's arguments seriously.

Peter Wehner, formerly deputy assistant to President George W. Bush, is a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

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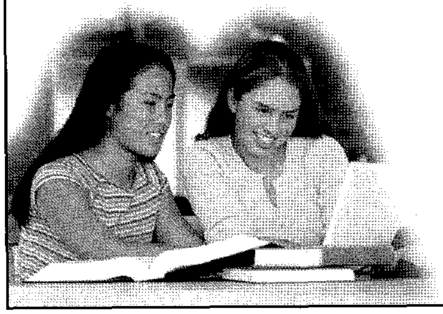

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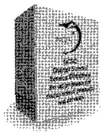

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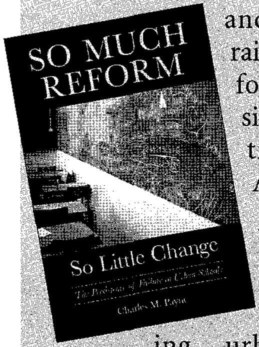
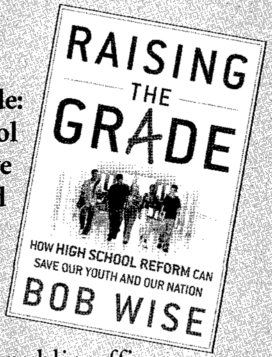
BOOK ALERT

So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools. Charles M. Payne (Harvard Education Press).

Payne, a sociologist at the University of Chicago, here sets out to explain "the sociology of failure" of urban reform. Drawing primarily on his experiences in Chicago, Payne considers the effects of social context, poverty, race, bureaucracy, and organizational dynamics, and uses them to raise hard questions for both progressive and conservative reformers. Arguing "there is just no doubt that one of the central problems in improving urban schools—arguably the central problem—is the problem of teacher resistance," he critiques the progressive expectation that teachers can eventually be coaxed along through evidence on two key counts: first, it presumes that reformers and teachers share the same aims and metrics, and second, it presumes that reformers can marshal the evidence to convince the holdouts. Payne deems both assumptions wrongheaded. He is equally caustic when it comes to those who pursue change via accountability, incentives, and choice, faulting their failure to pay sufficient heed to the importance of local culture, social capital, and trust in making change real. Challenging simple verities of all stripes, Payne has delivered a volume well worth a closer look.

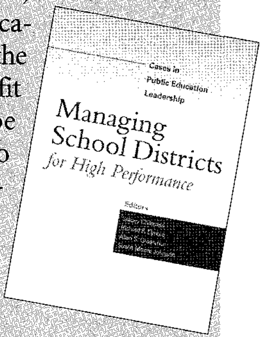


Raising the Grade: How High School Reform Can Save Our Youth and Our Nation. Bob Wise (Jossey-Bass).



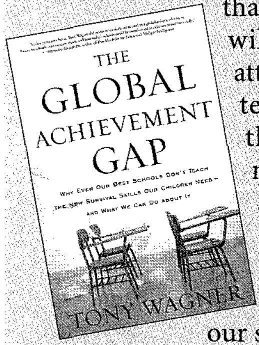
The price for having former public officials advocating for school reform is that we must every so often be subjected to a book like this one. In it, former West Virginia governor, former Congressman, and current president of the Alliance for Excellent Education Bob Wise piles up the platitudes and rings up the cash register. After serving up the familiar justifications for high school reform (e.g., social costs, changing demographics, dropout factories), Wise sets forth a threadbare list of the 10 elements of a successful high school (rigorous curricula, skilled teachers, community involvement, and so forth). He then launches into his litany of "more." He wants the feds to provide funds for adolescent literacy programs and state data systems; to ensure that every school is staffed by "skilled" teachers and principals; for district efforts to "personalize the educational experience"; and much more; and he calls on Congress to establish "meaningful high school accountability" (though the details are vague). Given the amorphous prescriptions and the absence of price tags, it's not clear whether Wise wants Congress to pony up 50 bucks or another $50 billion—only that he wants more. Talk about singing the same old song.

Managing School Districts for High Performance: Cases in Public Education Leadership. Stacey Childress, Richard F. Elmore, Allen S. Grossman, and Susan Moore Johnson, eds. (Harvard Education Press).

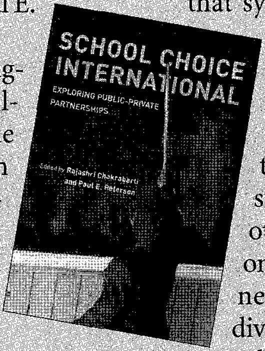

Cases in Public Education Leadership
Managing School Districts for High Performance
Editors

The idea that educators can learn from the business or nonprofit worlds used to be controversial. No longer. This textbook for aspiring superintendents and other district-level leaders, edited by two professors from Harvard's business school and two from its education school, rests on the premise that effective management practices are similar no matter what the sector. It offers 19 "cases" from corporations, agencies, and school districts that embody coherent, high-performing organizations. These cases are organized into "modules" on five themes: making coherence concrete; finding and supporting personnel; building a high-performing organization; managing schools across differences; and sustaining high performance over time. Many examples will be familiar to readers of the "best practices" literature (Southwest Airlines, New York City Police Department, Long Beach Unified School District), but the book's nearly 500 pages allow its editors to delve into details that will be fresh for most. This volume deserves to play a key role in education leadership programs nationwide, but even its heft won't teach superintendents everything they need to know. Leading a big school system is as much about politics as management; maybe the next set of cases should be written in collaboration with Harvard's political science department.

The Global Achievement Gap: Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach the New Survival Skills Our Children Need—and What We Can Do About It. Tony Wagner (Basic Books). The Harvard Ed School's Tony Wagner has written a thoughtful half-right book—and it's safe to predict that the other half will get the most attention. He contends, correctly, that something more than basic skills and factual knowledge needs to be inculcated by our schools and colleges if young Americans are to do their part to keep us competitive in tomorrow's flattening, shrinking world. He adumbrates seven "survival skills" (e.g., "critical thinking and problem solving," "agility and adaptability") that he believes must become education priorities. So far so good—if fundamentally familiar. And he identifies a few schools (High Tech High, for instance, Ted Sizer's Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School, and Dennis Litky's The Met) that in his opinion do a good job in these ways. Then—the book's wrong half—in language that will get him lionized at school-establishment conferences (and, perhaps, speaking fees to rival Jonathan Kozol's), he takes out after testing and standards and government programs like No Child Left Behind that emphasize such things. He deprecates knowledge. He deplores results-based accountability for schools, educators, and kids. It's no wonder this book's "blurbers" include Howard Gardner and Deborah Meier. It's a paean to educational progressivism dressed up as a guide to economic competitiveness.


THE
GLOBAL
ACHIEVEMENT
GAP
WHY EVEN OUR BEST SCHOOLS DON'T TEACH THE NEW SURVIVAL SKILLS OUR CHILDREN NEED—AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT
TONY WAGNER

School Choice International: Exploring Public-Private Partnerships. Rajashri Chakrabarti and Paul E. Peterson, eds. (MIT Press). As the subtitle of this book suggests, the papers in this scholarly volume are less about the act of choosing a school than about the ways the private sector has worked in partnership with public education systems to enlarge and enliven the landscape of schools that can be chosen. A variety of public-private partnerships around the globe are illuminated here: vouchers and charter schools in the U.S., of course, but also publicly funded vouchers in Colombia and Chile, city academies with private sector sponsors in the U.K., fee-charging schools serving the rural poor in India, concession schools in Colombia (where the management of some public schools is turned over to high-quality private schools), government contracting with private schools to enroll students in areas where spots in public schools are scarce in the Côte d'Ivoire and the Philippines, and more. A number of initiatives are described in detail in these papers—written for a conference cosponsored by Harvard's Program on Education Policy and Governance and the World Bank. Some initiatives are the subject of rigorous evaluations here, but more interesting than the case studies are the big-picture observations and arguments about the blending of public and private. One chapter, by Ludger Woessmann (coauthor of "School Choice International," *research*, page 54) uses international data to show that systems that make greater use of public-private partnerships (ideally combining public funding with private operation) perform better than systems that do not. As other chapters illustrate, not only are public-private partnerships widespread and diverse, but the lines between public and private can be fuzzy and shifting. Thomas Nechyba argues in one paper that in the United States there is no such thing as a true public school, since access to public schools is rationed through private housing markets, and it is unlikely that there will ever by a fully private school, since private schools are subject to government oversight, and support for private schools is conditional on certain public aims being met. An antidote to the view that there are two kinds of schools, public and private, this volume suggests that a larger role for the private sector in public education is more inevitable than radical.


SCHOOL CHOICE INTERNATIONAL
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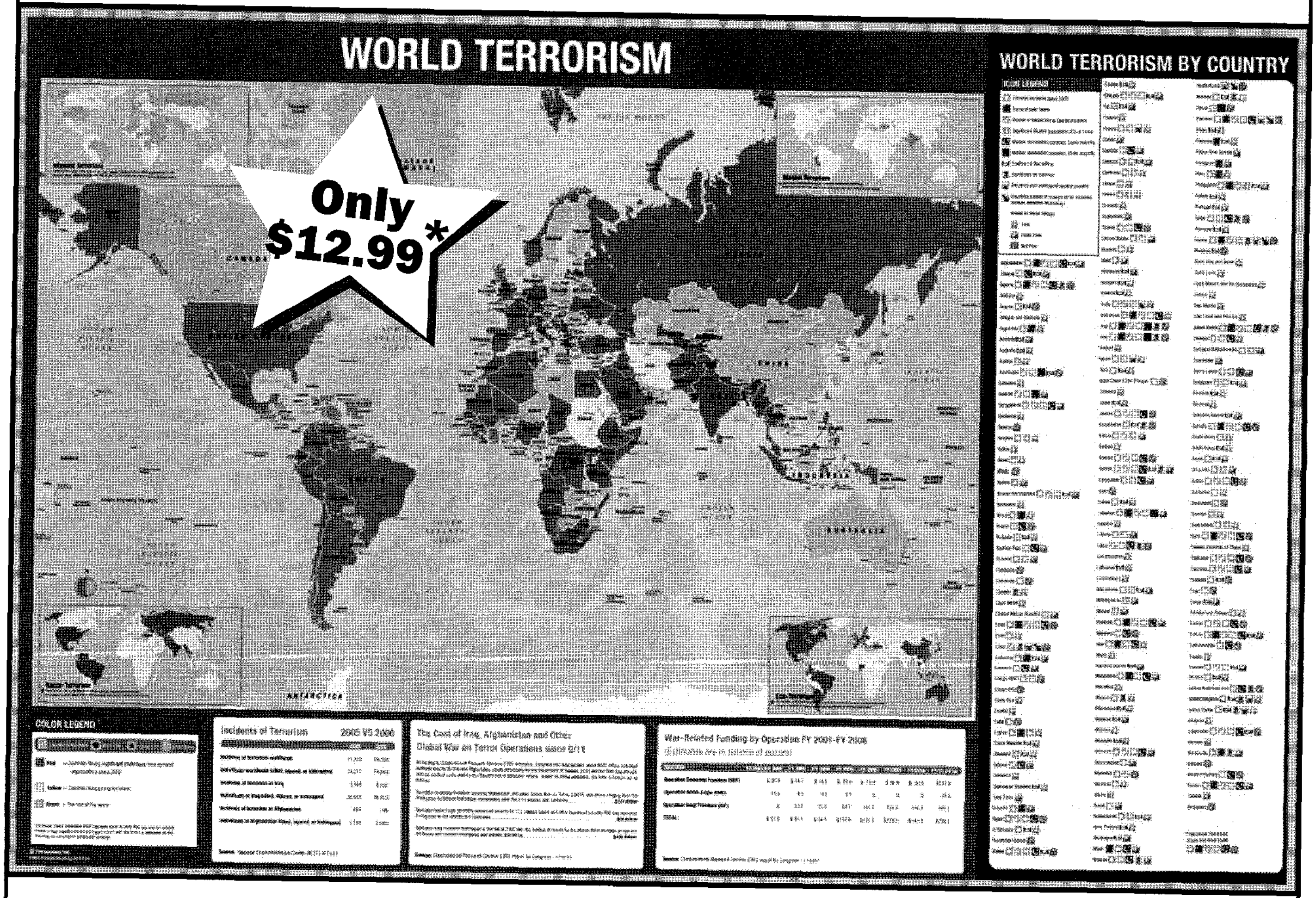
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Team Colors

Film explores racial divide in 1930s America

As reviewed by David Steiner

The Great Debaters
Viewed May 2008

In the 1930s, an all-black debate team from a small East Texas college defeated the all-white debate team of the University of Southern California (USC) in front of at least a thousand people. The Wiley College team was trained by English professor Melvin Tolson and anchored by James Farmer Jr., later founder of the Congress of Racial Equality. Take a little poetic license to replace USC with Harvard, and you have a classic David-defeats-Goliath tale that is Denzel Washington's movie *The Great Debaters.*

Even this wordy summary, however, fails to give you the measure of the film: James Jr. was 14 years old at the time of the great debate and something of a child prodigy; his father, a minister and son of a slave, was the first African American to earn a doctorate in the state of Texas. Tolson became an important poet (best known for his work "Harlem Gallery," a meditation on black America and the nature of art) and a courageous organizer of farm laborers across the color line. And that's just the start: throw in the movie's powerful reminders of brutal racism (a showdown over a run-over hog has one riveted, a lynching becomes all the more powerful for its indirection), a love story, a meditation on the universality of D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce, a paean to the dreams education makes possible, a debate about Jesus as radical social reformer, and you begin to get the whole picture.

Denzel Washington as Tolson and Forest Whitaker as Dr. James Farmer Sr. give strong performances, no more so than in a brief theological fencing match on the lessons of Jesus that is *the* memorable debate of the movie. The shimmering fury that underpins the direction and acting of the racially charged scenes scrapes the psyche of the viewer and alone is enough to recommend the film.

Given the penumbral riches, both historical and invented, that dance around the core narrative of the film, the college debates themselves barely register: the positions are repeatedly stacked in favor of Wiley, the interactions of the team are merely sketched, and deeper pedagogical questions of lasting importance remain buried. As Wiley College's own account made clear (it seems to have been dropped from their website), Tolson wrote out all the speeches for his students, who then memorized them, and even provided rebuttals so his team would be fully prepared. Some would call that instruction in the art of plagiarism. But the movie only touches on the ethics of professorial authorship. The debate topic is changed the night before to eliminate any advantage Wiley would otherwise have enjoyed from Tolson's work. Then and now, there is a fine line between debate coaching and scripting. At the same time, Tolson challenged his team through his considerable erudition, buttressed by contributions from other faculty members.

California State University professor David Gold, on whose fine research I am relying here, makes it clear that Tolson's pedagogical techniques combined extensive memorization, acute sensitivity to issues of logic, appeals to the classics, exhortation to social activism, and demands for the highest level of academic performance. Tolson, whose father was self-taught in Latin, Hebrew, and Greek, combined "racial pride, radical Christianity, philological rigor, and liberatory rhetoric that changed students' lives." In a phrase that E. D. Hirsch might embrace, Tolson evidently remarked that "the only difference between a bank manager and a janitor is vocabulary." James Farmer Jr. recalled being told to "finish *War and Peace*" and then "tackle Darwin, Freud and Marx. Don't just taste them, chew them and digest them."

There was, then, another movie hiding here—about a great, complex, bullying, courageous, immensely talented teacher, whose fierce discipline, acute sense of social inequalities, firsthand encounters with Jim Crow, and highly refined ear for language, literature, and culture would merit careful documentary treatment. But it is enough that his singular life and work enticed Denzel Washington and Oprah Winfrey (the movie's producer) to place his story on the ever-haunting canvas of our fraught racial history, and to remind us of the constant struggle to summon education as the midwife of what we can only hope is a more equitable future.

As for debating itself, the movie highlights the skills of academic research, of memorization, of elocution, of logical thought, and of teamwork that together make a compelling case for the educational value of formal debate (for more on the value of debate for education, see "Intellectual Combat," *school life,* page 88). Schooled as I was in the English form of debating—focused on persuasion, on speedy and sharp repartee, on humor and the ability to move an audience—I would add that combining American and British debating would make for an even richer educational experience.

David Steiner is dean of the School of Education at Hunter College, CUNY, and former director of arts education at the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C.

Linky Love, Snark Attacks, and Fierce Debates about Teacher Quality?

A peek inside the education blogosphere

BY MICHAEL J. PETRILLI

If I mentioned Thomas Friedman and George Will, surely you would know that they are among the nation's most influential newspaper columnists. But what about Markos Moulitsas and Michelle Malkin? If these names don't ring a bell, you haven't explored the world of web logs, or blogs for short. They are two of the nation's most influential *bloggers.*

Six of the top 10 education blogs focus on technology-related topics.

Likewise, if I asked what Diane Ravitch, Jack Jennings, and Kati Haycock have in common, you would say they are all contributors to K–12 education policy debates, oft quoted in the nation's leading newspapers. But what about Will Richardson, Joanne Jacobs, and Eduwonkette? If these names are unfamiliar to you, it's time to visit the education blogosphere. As a relatively new education blogger myself (at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute's Flypaper blog), let me be your guide.

Blogs burst onto the scene in the late 1990s and gained major momentum in the middle of this decade. By some estimates there are now more than 100 million blogs worldwide. But while reading and writing blogs is extremely popular—two blogging sites (blogger.com and wordpress.com) each receive more web traffic in the United States than the number-one online newspaper (nytimes.com)—no single blog is reaching a mass audience. For example, Daily Kos, one of the most prominent political blogs on the net, pulls in only 0.027 percent of the global web audience in a given period, versus 0.87 percent that read nytimes.com. More than 1,600 web sites in the U.S. get more traffic than Daily Kos; nytimes.com, meanwhile, is ranked number 24. (These data all come from alexa.com.) Blogs represent the "long end of the tail" of the media; a new form of mass communication this is not.

And at the far end of that long tail sits the education blogosphere, a niche within a niche, with as many as 30,000 blogs. Joannejacobs.com, written by a former *San Jose Mercury News* reporter and columnist, is among its leading lights, yet is ranked lower than about 140,000 other web sites in the U.S. (Compare that to edweek.org, which is ranked about 40,000th.) But Jacobs is a big fish in this small pond. Table 1 shows that her site, along with Richardson's weblogg-ed.com, significantly outplaces all competitors when measured by the number of other blogs linking to them recently. This isn't a perfect indicator of a blog's influence (while daily or monthly readership measures might be better, they are not available for all blogs) but it does show the "authority" given to a site by other bloggers. In this world, links are the coin of the realm, and the more the better.

So what are these education bloggers blogging about? Will Richardson, whose site is the top education blog, informs teachers about how to integrate technology into the classroom. That's a common theme: 6 of the top 10 education blogs focus on technology-related topics. Joannejacobs.com is more ecumenical, linking to and commenting on daily newspaper articles and other blog posts and providing a forum for others to do the same. Some write about instructional practice, typically with a clear progressive bent. The Fischbowl, for instance, describes itself as "a staff development blog for Arapahoe High School [CO] teachers exploring constructivism and 21st century learning skills."

Perhaps the most interesting among the top 10 education blogs is Students 2.0. As its name implies, the site is penned by pupils from around the world who submit entries to the blog's editors. In some ways, its credo is radical, decrying the expectation that students be "widgets for the vast machine of industry." Yet the site is also refreshingly committed to high standards. Consider this statement. "Every post is reviewed for quality: not just anything will be accepted. You will find no improper grammar or truncated ideas here. In fact, you may well learn a thing or two about excellence in writing; we certainly hope you are willing to learn from a generation of student teachers."

If none of these blogs is familiar to you, don't fret. Readers of *Education Next* are probably more likely to be drawn to education policy sites, none of which reach "top 10" status among education blogs overall (see Table 2). Here the masters of the (blog) universe are all wonks: Eduwonkette, Eduwonk, and The Education Wonks, and two of the three are anonymous wonks, or used to be. The story of Eduwonkette is particularly illuminating; she was recently revealed to be Jennifer Jennings, a graduate student in sociology at Columbia University. Rather than merely toiling away in the vineyards of the American Educational Research Association, writing papers for fellow academics, she recently overtook Eduwonk as the top education policy blogger, even though her competitor is a former Clinton White House aide and cofounder of a major Washington education think tank. It's clichéd to say that the Internet evens the playing field and makes the traditional trappings of power and influence obsolete, but so it is.

Further to that point, it's also striking that the major education interest groups aren't yet bigtime players in the blogosphere. While the United Federation of Teachers, the American Federation of Teachers, and the National School Boards Association all have active blogs, none makes the top 10 lists.

And while the teacher-oriented blogs seem to skew toward a constructivist worldview, the policy blogs are more balanced between Left and Right. Eduwonk and the Quick and the Ed write from the center-left; Intercepts, Flypaper, and Jay P. Greene come from the center-right. (The latter two were launched this past spring and are steadily moving up in the rankings.) In this way, the blogosphere seems to mimic real life, where most teachers skew progressive in their educational philosophy, but policy debate is more evenly balanced.

There's one other way that the Net mirrors reality: the lack of a prominent parent blog. This isn't to say that parents aren't blogging; there are plenty of local or issue-specific parent blogs around. But there's no significant parent voice in the national online conversation, just as there's no national parent advocacy group in Washington. That's a real shame; someone should blog about it. ■

Tracking the Top Blog (Table 1) *Education blogs by rank, August 2008*

Blog	Author(s)	Technorati Authority Score
Weblogg-ed	Will Richardson, author, *Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms*	850
Joanne Jacobs	Joanne Jacobs, former San Jose *Mercury News* reporter and columnist	788
Cool Cat Teacher	Vicki Davis, teacher in the Westwood Schools in Camilla, Georgia	531
2¢ Worth	David Warlick, former teacher and founder of The Landmark Project	529
Speed of Creativity	Wesley Fryer, former teacher and now director of technology and education outreach for the Oklahoma Heritage Association	462
Dangerously Irrelevant	Dr. Scott McLeod, coordinator of the educational administration program at Iowa State University	443
Edu.blogs	Ewan McIntosh, teacher and professional development provider in Edinburgh, Scotland	406
Fischbowl	Karl Fisch, teacher at Arapahoe High School (Centennial, CO)	323
Students 2.0	K-12 students from around the world	266
The Thinking Stick	Jeff Utecht, technology specialist, Shanghai American School	243

Note: Authority score is the number of unique blogs that have linked to that blog within the past 180 days, as measured by technorati.com.

SOURCES: Selections culled by author from a list of the "Top 50 education blogs" available at Dangerously Irrelevant. Authority scores from technorati.com.

Wonkfest (Table 2) *Education policy blogs by rank, August 2008*

Blog	Author(s)	Technorati Authority Score
Eduwonkette	Jennifer Jennings, doctoral student, Columbia University	179
Eduwonk	Andrew Rotherham, cofounder, Education Sector	165
The Education Wonks	Anonymous (EdWonk, TeacherWonk, and TeenWonk)	129
The Quick and the Ed	Kevin Carey and others, Education Sector	103
Intercepts	Mike Antonucci, Education Intelligence Agency	89
Matthew Tabor	Matthew Tabor, independent college admissions counselor	82
Schools Matter	Jim Horn, PhD (affiliation unknown)	82
This Week In Education	Alexander Russo, former Capitol Hill staffer	82
Flypaper	The Education Gadfly team (including author), Thomas B. Fordham Institute	79
Jay P. Greene	Jay P. Greene, University of Arkansas Department of Education Reform (and others)	76

Note: Authority score is the number of unique blogs that have linked to that blog within the past 180 days, as measured by technorati.com.

SOURCES: Author. Authority scores from technorati.com.

school life

Intellectual Combat

My journey in competitive forensics

BY SHAWN BRISCOE

In the fall of 1990, I somewhat reluctantly joined my high school debate team. My first debate focused on whether the United States should increase manned space exploration. I was completely lost; it seemed I had forgotten how to speak. Thankfully, I had a supportive community in my hometown of Nevada, Missouri, and a talented coach by the name of Tim Gore. I quickly found there is nothing quite like watching the faces in the audience as people realize you have taken control of the debate. I admit I became intrigued by the idea of intellectual combat.

PHOTO / AUTHOR

I have witnessed students shift their views on a host of topics as a result of their debate experience.

As an educator today, I draw on the writings of University of Washington political science and education professor Walter Parker, who has noted that "engaged citizens do not materialize out of thin air. They do not naturally grasp such knotty principles as tolerance, impartial justice, the separation of church and state, the needs for limits on majority power, or the difference between liberty and license." If our students are to understand the pressing issues of the day, they must be exposed to myriad viewpoints and able to synthesize information from multiple sources.

Forensics challenges students through events in both speech and debate. In the discipline of platform speaking, students select a controversial subject and conduct extensive research before trying to persuade the audience. Competitors in extemporaneous speaking have 30 minutes to prepare a seven-minute response to a question, complete with source citations. Topics the National Federation of State High School Associations developed for extemporaneous speaking contests in 2008 included, Should public schools be allowed to segregate along gender lines? Should phone companies that aided in illegal wiretaps by the government be immune from prosecution? Should China relax its one-child policy?

In competitive debates, students do not choose which side they will defend. Most tournaments involve switch-sides competition, in which debaters defend the proposition (affirmative) and opposition (negative) sides an equal number of times. To prepare, student competitors must look at the issue through a nonpartisan lens or from multiple perspectives, thereby gaining a deep understanding of issues that confront our national (and world) leaders. Over several years of teaching and coaching debate, I have witnessed students shift their views on a host of topics as a result of their debate experience. Most often, they grow to acknowledge, accept, and empathize with those who hold opinions contrary to their own.

Students who hope to succeed in forensics must possess wide-ranging knowledge of current issues. It is not uncommon to catch my students reading from the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*, and *Political Science Quarterly*, not to mention pocket copies of the Constitution, *Common Sense*, and inspirational books of quotations.

A few years ago, while driving home from work in Alaska, I received a call from a former student who was at a tournament in Florida. At the time, students commonly used Foucault's writings to argue against federal action to alleviate the harms of the status quo. As the student launched into a description of how an opposing team had presented a unique twist on Foucault, I thought, "Man, I don't know how I would answer that." Before I had a chance to respond, he blurted out, "It was sweet. Do you know what we did?" He then explained how he drew on his understanding of readings from social ecologists, professors of intercultural communication, and John Stuart Mill to develop his own criticism of Foucault's thoughts on power, knowledge, and discourse. The tournament judge commended both teams for developing new takes on a common argument.

Whether forensics is a mainstay in the curriculum, an extracurricular club, or used occasionally by teachers in the classroom, it has the power to inspire students to learn and to help them grasp the concepts we aim to instill.

Shawn Briscoe is debate coach and adjunct professor in the Department of Communication and Discourse Studies at the University of Alaska Anchorage and coaches speech and debate at South Anchorage High School.

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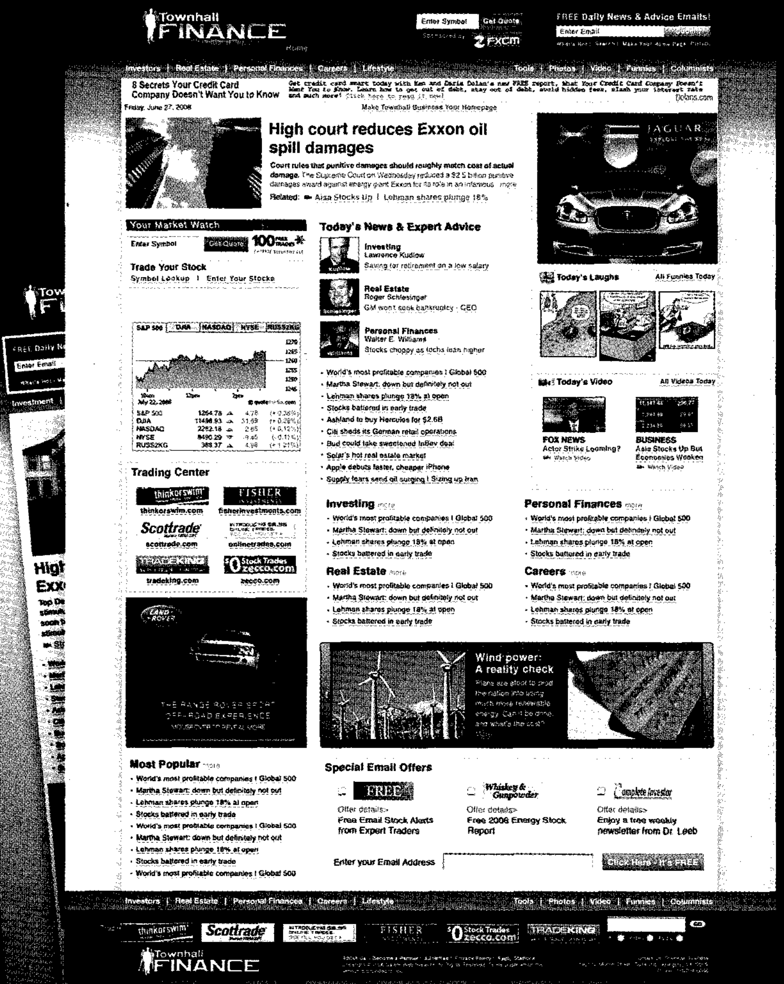

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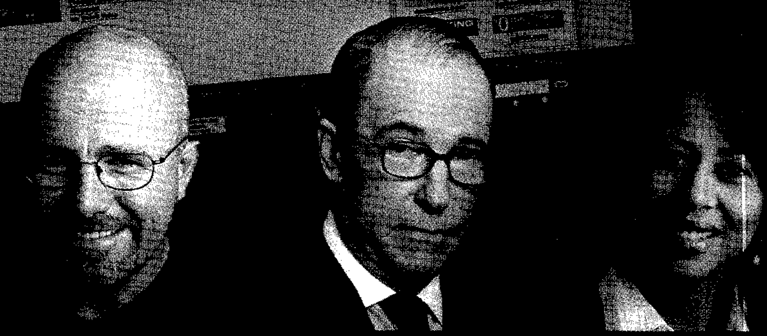

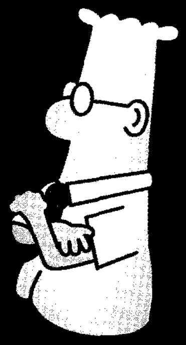

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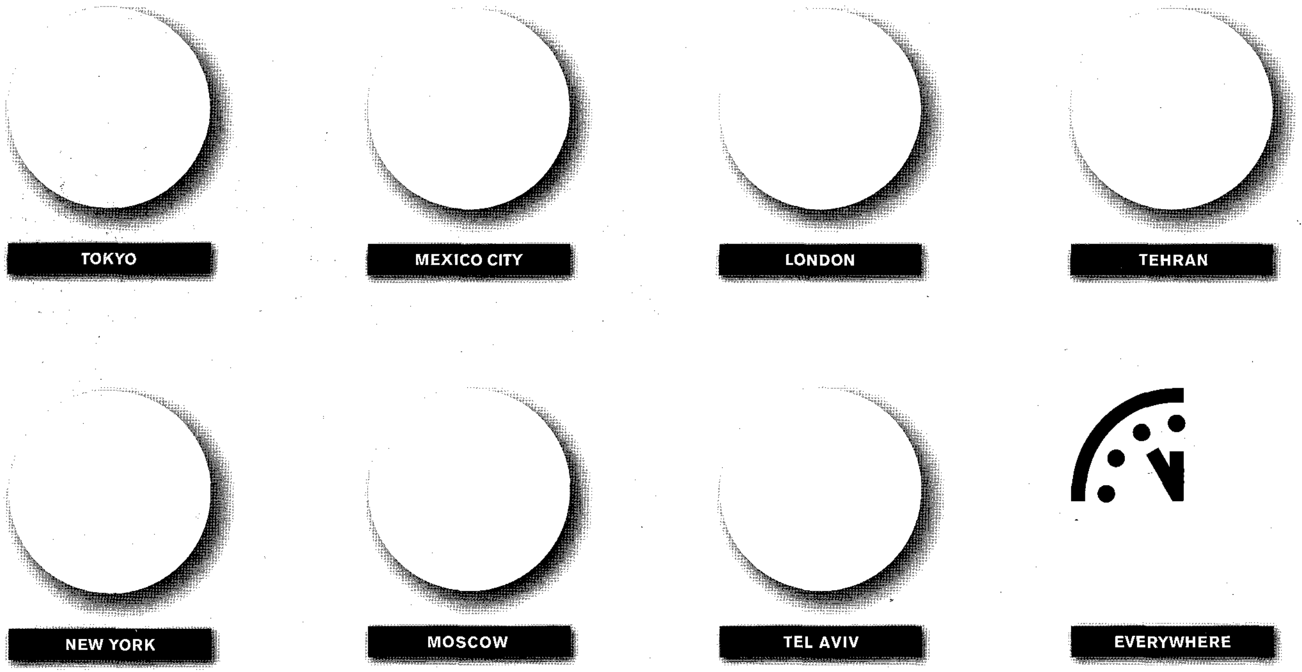

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